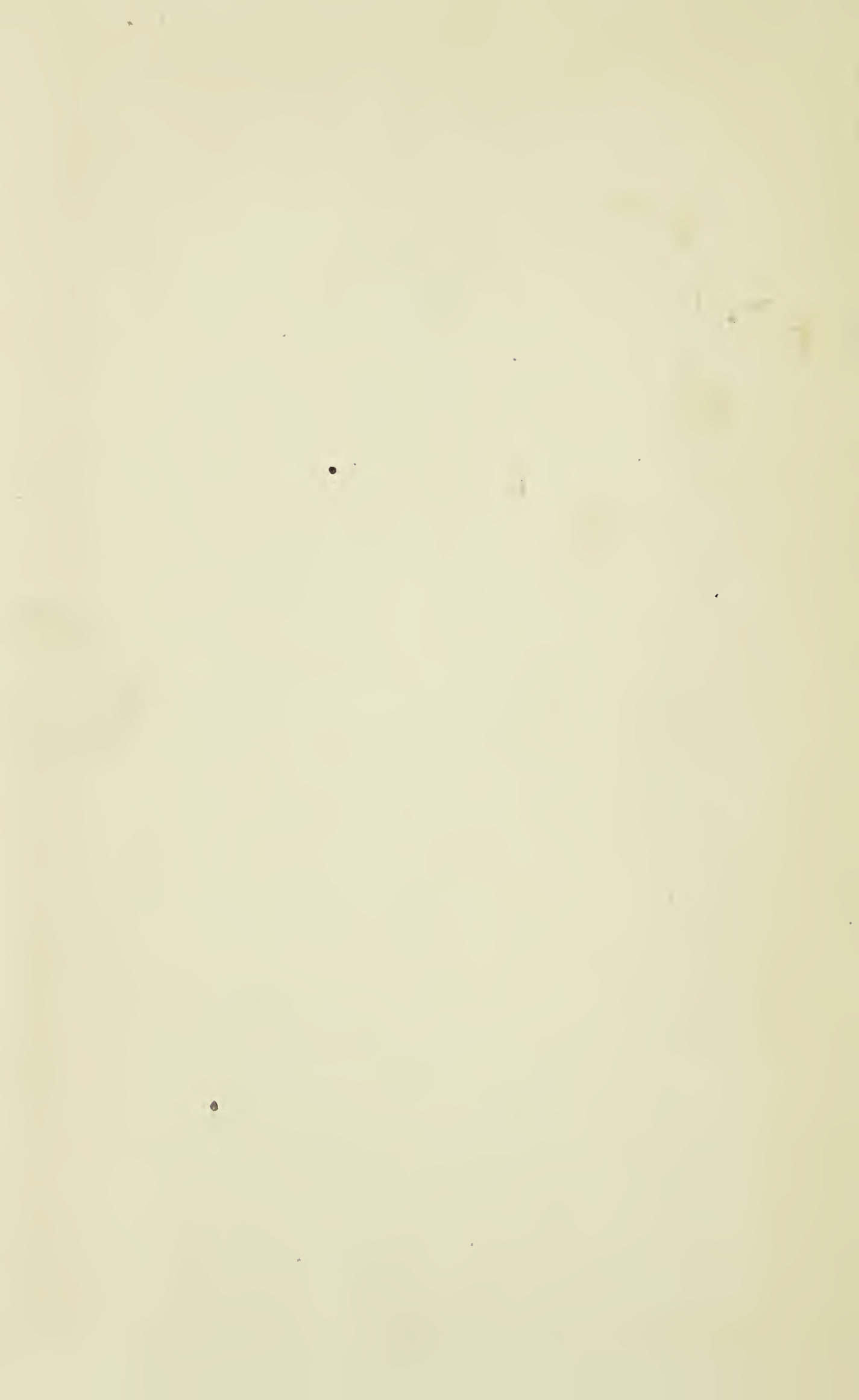


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Divinity of man













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# THE DIVINITY OF MAN





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TORONTO

# THE DIVINITY OF MAN

BY  
REGINALD WELLS

Say, first, of God above, or man below,  
What can we reason, but from what we know?  
Of man, what see we but his station here,  
From which to reason, or to which refer?  
Thro' worlds unnumber'd tho' the God be known,  
'Tis ours to trace Him only in our own.

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## INTRODUCTION

THE following pages are the outcome of a series of conferences given by the writer when serving as chaplain in H.M.S. *Lord Nelson*. His object was to help his hearers to formulate a philosophy of life. Previous experience as chaplain on the Western Front during the earlier days of the War and as vicar of agricultural and suburban parishes, had convinced him that most men, if not all men, at one time or another feel the need of such a philosophy, but that they do not know to whom to turn for help in their search. In bygone days, when western Christendom was undivided, men found in the teaching of St. Thomas a sufficient theoretical basis for their conduct, and in the lives of the saints they had practical examples of the realized ideal. Later, when England repudiated the papal claims, Englishmen came to regard the written word of the Bible as an infallible mentor, and they informed their personal lives from the patterns set by the



heroes of the Old Testament. To-day the position of the Bible is as little secure as that of the Pope in popular esteem. Destructive criticism has done its work. Men are without a commonly accepted guide to conduct. The ground is clear for the erection of something positive. The ground is clear and the need is great, for to-day there is no spiritual edifice to serve as an habitation for popular ideals and aspirations.

Formerly men looked out on the world with eyes which saw every object clear and sharply defined. To-day we think in terms of evolution. Everything is to us a becoming, and in the present we see at once the past and the future together enrolled. The official presentation of Christianity—at least so thinks the man in the street—has not yet adapted itself to this changed outlook. Official Christianity seems still to be an affair of sudden occurrences and abrupt beginnings. The task which the writer set himself, therefore, when he undertook these conferences, was “an attempt to show the place occupied by the religion of the Cross in the main stream of religious development.” Obviously such an attempt could not but lead him to venture himself among many subjects in which he is only an amateur; and the conditions under which the conferences were delivered precluded

him from the use of any reference library. It is only his sense of the great need for some such work as that on which he embarked that emboldens him to publish the following pages.

Officers and ratings from all departments of the ship assisted at the conferences at one time or another, engine-room artificers being perhaps the most regular and the most interested listeners. As the conferences went on regular church-members tended to absent themselves more and more frequently, but the number of "non-sectarians" who assisted steadily increased.

The aim of the conferences led the writer to lay stress on the immanence of divinity in nature. He would, therefore, point out that his belief in prayer and in human ability rightly to think of God as distinct from nature, though manifested forth by means of it, presupposes his belief in divine transcendence. Also he would frankly acknowledge that he has neglected to depict the merits of Protestantism. His audience was composed, with very few exceptions, of men who had been brought up in the Protestant tradition. The writer's object was, therefore, to try and show how far and why Protestantism has failed. It is sufficiently obvious that without the right to free expression of opinion which was part of the outcome of our fathers' protest

against clerical domination these pages could never have been published. Some of the illustrations used in this book are purposely crude, and the brief time at his disposal forced the writer to assume a more dogmatic attitude than he desired. But on the whole it seemed wiser to publish the conferences in very much the same form as that in which they were delivered. Nor has he dared to acknowledge the sources to which many of his thoughts and even of his expressions are due. Absence of books of reference forced him to quote from memory, and the fear of misquotation has prevented him from expressing his gratitude to the real originators of much that is in this book. He can only trust that they will fail to recognise the misquotation and misinterpretation of their words, or that, if they recognise, they will forgive.

Throughout the book the title "Christ" is applied not only to our Lord, Jesus, but to God Almighty when shown forth on earth, perfectly and imperfectly, by the self-sacrificing spirit of any man or body of men. The word "Christian" is used of any religious system which has led men on to the Way of the Cross.



## CHAPTER I

### THE FACT OF CREATION

MANY people to-day deplore the failure of organised religion to accomplish its task, but they seldom pause to consider what it is exactly that they wish organised religion to do. This book is the result of an attempt to enquire into the meaning and purpose of religion, and it has not been easy to know where the enquiry should begin ; for religion is the link that binds earth and heaven, and of earth we know but little, while of heaven we know less. In the past, men have been inclined to build their theologies on theories about heaven. They have found themselves to be the possessors of a certain bodily shape or form, a certain amount of energy, and a certain definite purpose, by which they sought to regulate their lives. They have then passed on to discuss the nature of this trinity of purpose, energy and form in pure unbounded state, and they have personified it as the Trinity of Father,

Holy Ghost and Son. Such a theology may possibly help men, who have time for philosophical speculation, to find their way to truth. Surely for us it is wiser, frankly and humbly, to construct our theology with such material as we can find in this finite world in which we live. Truth or reality in absolute perfection we cannot comprehend. We can apprehend it only as it is displayed in this world of our experience. "Now we see through a glass darkly." The object of this book, therefore, is to trace the development and history of religion in this world, and by religion is meant man's effort to ascertain the true nature of things, and to enter into communion with reality.

Our search will lead us out of the finite into the infinite, for the world itself is infinity displayed in finite form. Every object that we perceive and recognise becomes known to us by means of the quality that is displayed in it; and all quality is infinite. Thus when we see a white-coloured, hard, heavy object, which is cool to the touch, we may perhaps recognise it as a bit of marble. Our recognition will be due to the coolness, the weight, the hardness, the colour and the other manifestations of quality which experience has taught us to associate with the thing called marble. It is only by its quality that we can perceive anything, and yet quality

in itself, and apart from the form in which it is manifested, is infinite, illimitable and eternal. It cannot be increased nor lessened. It is always the same. When a river, for example, wears away the surface of the rocks that impede its current and imparts to them a shining smoothness, the abstract quality of smoothness is not lessened nor increased. The newly polished stone furnishes merely one more example upon earth of the illimitable quality of smoothness. The smoothness imparted to one stone does not render it more difficult for another stone to become smooth because the quality of smoothness is becoming exhausted !

Through the finite we discover the infinite : by means of that which is ever changing we perceive the eternal. "Change and decay in all around I see," but quality changes not nor suffers decay. It is only the forms in which quality displays itself that change. The quality of smoothness is still the same as it was when such a manifestation of quality first made its appearance, though the forms in which that quality has been apparent have been vastly more in number than all the polished boulders that have ever existed. All value lies in quality. Without a form to limit and define it, quality is sheer, absolute being or existence. Without



quality to give it value, form would be sheer, infinite nothingness or non-existence ; for how could entire absence of all quality have any sort of form ? Take away every manifestation of quality that we can perceive in the marble, weight and colour and smoothness and the rest—and what remains ? Nothing.

All that is permanent and of value lies in quality ; form is merely the temporary means by which quality displays itself. In more technical words form is phenomenal and unreal, and quality is eternal and real. Yet in this world many a man is apt to regard form as of greater importance than quality. This is not surprising, for a man acts, and is acted upon, entirely by means of his bodily form. It is by means of outward form that inward perception comes to him. He hears with his ears ; he talks with his mouth ; he understands with his brain. His powers are limited by the capacity of his material brain and body. Capacity comes from the Latin word *capere*, “ to take,” and it means the quantity that can be “ taken into ” a definite space. Form is an affair of quantity or capacity. It deals with the question, “ How much ? ” And this is a question which it is possible to answer. It is possible to estimate the amount of a man’s courage ; it is possible to measure

the colour shown in material objects into gradations of strength ; it is possible to mark off the time of day with hours and minutes. It is always possible to measure the amount of quality displayed in any form. But nobody in the world can say exactly what pure, unembodied quality in itself may be. Quality is derived from the Latin word *qualis*, which means “ of what sort ? ” And, if we are asked to describe it, we can only repeat “ Qualis ! ” Infinity is not to be measured by men’s minds.

It is because we can only perceive quality when it is embodied and defined in form, that form sometimes seems to us to be real and permanent and quality to be fugitive and unreal. We speak of the unchanging hills, but there is never a hill in the world which is not perpetually changing its shape. The thinking man knows this. He knows that though quality may seem to be vague and unreal, yet truly quality is the only reality. He knows that he must not judge by appearances, for appearances are misleading. He knows, for example, that though the chair on which he sits may seem to be solid, yet, if science is to be believed, that chair is anything but solid in the common sense of the word. It may consist of billions of infinitesimal worlds of whirling motion. Whatever the chair may be,

he knows that it is not what it seems to be. He knows that the world is a world of appearances and that appearances are illusory. Men find themselves the victims of a practical joke. They are put down into a world of make-believe. They are bidden to play the game. They are obliged to play the game blindfolded, for they cannot discern the whole true nature of reality, while their thoughts are hedged about with finite barriers, and thoughtless men are apt to take the shadow for the substance.

All thoughtful people agree that the world may be described as quality displayed in form. They agree that quality is permanent, while form is ever changing. They agree that form derives all its value from quality, and that apart from quality it would be nothingness. They agree, therefore, that the world may be described as infinite quality or absolute existence displayed by means of non-existence. In other words, all thoughtful people agree that the world is a mingling of reality with unreality. But people disagree about the true nature of that reality, of which the "qualities," with which we are familiar, are manifestations. Some men say that reality is energy, pure and simple. Others maintain that reality is activity, or energy-actuated-by-purpose. The former regard purpose as a



mere by-product of the manifestation of energy in form. They assert that purpose is of this world only, and without eternal reality. They point to the apparently wanton cruelty of nature and to all her failures. They note the number of seeds that are formed only that they may perish. They ask the meaning or purpose of wasted lives and of mute, inglorious Miltons. They say that there is at least as much evidence that the energy, with which we are acquainted, is actuated by chance as there is that it is actuated by purpose. They urge that science seems to show that blind and simple energy lies behind all things, and that there is no evidence for design in history.

Science does, indeed, seem to show that the world may be spoken of in terms of simple energy. Heat and colour and sound, for instance, are all manifestations of the same energy ; and much energy that seems to be different is really the same. The power of moral suasion, the power that resides in a waterfall or in a steam-engine, the power that enables plants and animals and men to retain their earthly life is all the same. It comes directly or indirectly from the sun. A good dinner will fit a man for manual work, and also for intellectual work. It will give him the courage that comes of a full stomach, and



it will make him more willing to respond to a beggar's appeal, whether the beggar be a gentleman in rags asking him to give up his cash, or a gentleman in a surplice asking him to give up his sins. The only difference between a man and a stone appears to be that the man is conscious of the energy within himself and can use it, while the stone is unconscious and purposeless. Whence does conscious purpose come? Is it the product or a by-product of creation? Science gives no certain answer, but she bids us search in this world in which we live for facts which shall help us to form our answer.

About the origin of the world it is possible only to speak in uncertain tones. Research adds to our extent of knowledge every day; human beliefs are ever changing. The accounts of the creation given in the Bible are no longer regarded as the hasty notes of capable private secretaries employed by the Creator. We have no certainty to guide us. The theories suggested in the following pages, therefore, are intended only to serve as rough and ready signposts towards that path to truth, which each man must find for himself.

At first, it seems, the world consisted of a conglomerate gaseous mass. The earth was waste and void, and darkness was upon the face

of the deep. But, though all seemed to be chaos, reality was ever mingled with unreality. Quality was in the world from the first. Form without quality is unimaginable.

Then reality began to express itself more clearly in diverse forms. The principle of separation and division became more apparent. "There was evening and there was morning, one day," and a firmament divided the waters from the waters. Things seemed to be becoming separate from things. Reality was beginning to take shape.

But though one thing might seem to be separate from another thing and to have separate "qualities" of its own, yet until separate living organisms appeared, creation would remain apparently inert and inarticulate. How any organism gained the appearance of separate energy we do not know. The lifeless grain of sand is blown by the wind: the hoar frost on the rock forms elaborate patternings: but sand and frost have no separate energy inherent in themselves. Their movements are a part of the general energy of the universe. The general energy of the universe displays itself in many ways, such as wind and fire and force of gravity. There is also the force of habit. Each time a deed is done, its repetition becomes the easier. A stream, for instance, as it flows towards the sea, forms a channel which

gradually becomes more and more free from obstruction. Thus it becomes easier for the water to obey the law of nature and find its own level. But one manifestation of energy affects another. The meeting of the river's flood with the tide of the sea causes the sand that is borne in the river's stream to silt up, and to check the escape of the waters. The river overflows its banks, and the channel that it had formed again becomes obstructed. The interplay between the different manifestations of energy gives to inarticulate matter the appearance of inherent energy. The havoc working floods of overflowing rivers seem to savages to be inspired by a malignant spirit that prompts them to destruction.

There is, indeed, little visible difference even to educated but untrained eyes between the capillary energy of lifeless things and that displayed by the lowest forms of life. The plant sucks up energy from the soil: the dry surface of the soil itself sucks up moisture from the damper earth beneath it. The grain of sand is blown hither and thither by the wind; it is propelled by external stimulus. The paramecia flit hither and thither in a pool of water and it seems that the stimulus which causes their movements is also entirely external to the moving organisms themselves. The only difference between the



lowest organism and the lifeless thing seems to be that the one is reproductive of its kind and the other has no power of reproduction. Most scientists refuse to admit that any one has as yet succeeded in bridging the gulf between the energy displayed in inarticulate matter and that displayed by matter which is obviously animate. Quite possibly the quest for "the origin of life" will some day meet with success.

It is not possible to say whether the lowest form of life should be classified as vegetable or animal. Probably it is the parent stock from which both plants and beasts descend, but the plant always remains of a distinctly lower type than the beast. It serves as a sort of connecting link between the animal and mineral kingdoms. Like a stone, it is tied, more or less, to the spot where it is placed. Like an animal, it can exercise some mastery over circumstance. It can thrust its roots into the soil and compel its environment to minister to its needs. It can suck up a supply of energy from the common stock, and so create itself and maintain its own vitality and freedom. In the plant the "self" or separate life is apparent. For this reason the plant is sensitive. The thing *is* hot, the plant *feels* hot.

The plant owes its superiority over the thing, as it seems, to the principle of separation and

division. The thing is merely one bit of matter apparently separated from another ; but the plant is energy apparently separated from energy. It is a living organism apparently possessed of energy of its own, apart from the general energy of the universe. But the superiority of the plant to the thing is perhaps not greater than its inferiority to the beast. Like the animal, it has a separate life of its own : like the thing, it is incapable of moving itself from one spot to another. It has some measure of freedom, it is true, but it is still almost entirely at the mercy of external forces. Without the help of wind or insect it can seldom propagate its species, except by throwing out suckers. When its suckers have exhausted the ground at their disposal and reached a boundary of sea or barren rock, the family must die out unless a friendly insect or favouring wind will carry its seed to pastures new.

In the animal the principle of separation and division is carried further than in the plant. Each part of the animal has certain definite and specific duties which it must perform. This is true, also, to a large extent of the plant, but in the animal specialisation of function is far more elaborate and permanent. A plant or plant-like lower animal, when deprived of some part of its structure on which its health depends, will

sometimes maintain its life for a time by using another part of its structure to do the work of the organ that is lost. Any gardener who can strike a cutting, knows this very well. If the gardener himself be deprived of some part of his anatomy which is as essential to his health as roots are essential to a plant, he will learn by bitter experience that transference of function becomes more and more difficult to animals the further they are removed from the vegetable kingdom.

In the animal some of its parts have specialised in locomotory functions, and are known as legs ; some have specialised in digestive functions, and are called the stomach ; the most important parts have specialised in sensitiveness, and are called the brain. Thanks apparently to the principle of separation and division, the animal acquires so great a mastery over his environment that he ceases to bear much resemblance to his vegetable cousins. His legs or wings enable him to move himself from place to place. His beak and claws, or hoofs and horns enable him to fight his way. While the plant struggles for its existence and for the perpetuation of its species unwittingly, the animal fights for itself and its young, and he has wit to know that he is fighting. His wit resides in his brain. The animal is



consciousness apparently separated from consciousness. The plant *feels hot*: the animal *knows that he feels hot*.

When once an animal knows that he is doing anything, he can pass on to reflect on what he is doing. When once he knows that he is fighting, he can pass on to consider how best to fight. He can map out a programme for himself and form a purpose. As soon as he can form a purpose he is worthy of the name of man, for man is purpose apparently separated from the common mass of purpose. He is self-conscious. In him the self is apparent to itself. In him creation is articulate. The thing *is hot*: the plant *feels hot*: the animal *knows that he feels hot*: man *knows that he knows that he feels hot*.

“Out of the eater came forth meat:

And out of the strong came forth sweetness.”

Out of creation came forth self, and out of apparent death self-conscious life emerged.

This hasty glance at the development of creation seems to show that the purpose lying behind it is the production of “self” or living consciousness. There is no reason, therefore, why energy should not be described as activity, since it does appear to have been inspired by purpose. Yet the evolution of the self may be the result of chance. Life has evolved; but who shall say



why it has evolved ? A parlour-maid opens the door when the visitor rings the bell. Probably she opens it because she heard the ring, and formed her purpose accordingly. Possibly she never heard the ring and went to the door to look at the state of the weather or in search of the milkman. Before we can be sure that the evolution of the self is not fortuitous, but the result of eternal purpose, we must show that the self finally projects itself right out of creation. Creation is a mingling of reality with unreality. It is, therefore, imperfect ; it is neither one thing nor the other. Pure activity, purposeful energy, cannot show itself in its perfection while it is embodied in unreality, any more than harmony can show itself in discord. Activity can display itself imperfectly *in* creation ; it can only display itself perfectly *by means of* creation. If, therefore, the purpose of creation is the self-display of activity, then the climax of creation can only be reached when activity rids itself of the trammels of space and time, and when it asserts itself right out of matter and becomes free and independent of it. If it can be shown to do this, then purpose is shown to belong to the sphere of eternity. It is shown to be the Alpha and Omega of all things, their beginning and their end.

## CHAPTER 11

### THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

IF creation can be explained as the self-assertion of reality, then the principle of separation and division does not mean the separation of reality into little bits, for reality is indivisible : but it does mean the gradual separation of reality from out of unreality : it does mean progress from the false unity of appearances to the true unity of the spirit ; and, as a matter of fact, the development of creation does show such a progress.

A stone is separated from the parent rock and falls into an abyss, but the separation is in appearance only, and not in reality. In all its headlong flight, it retains its contact with the air, and the air connects it with the position from which it fell. It is impossible really to make a vacuum ; but even the coffee in a " vacuum flask " affords a parable to teach us the impossibility of disconnecting matter from the material world. The contents of the flask

are not cut off from the outside air : they are always connected with it by means of the cork. A thing's position within the world of matter may be changed ; it is impossible to separate any thing from the material world altogether. If it were possible to do this the separated thing would pass into nothingness and disappear. It would cease to have quality.

Quality cannot be separated from quality. Nor can energy be separated from energy. Separation is illusory. This becomes evident as soon as the " self " or apparently separate life becomes manifest in a plant. Pluck up a plant by its roots and it will die, unless it be replanted. It will lose its semblance of separate life and cease to be a living plant. Its structure will become an apparently lifeless thing of sticks and wilted roots. Just because the plant is energy apparently separated from the common stock of energy, it must retain abiding communion with the world of energy in which it has its being.

But while the plant must rest in abiding communion with the world of energy in which it has its being, the connection which it must retain with the soil, its channel of energy, need only be intermittent. The plant can be dug up and replanted. It may be replanted provided that it has stored within its structure sufficient energy



to serve its needs until it is reconnected with the soil. Dig up a plant in the morning and replant it in the afternoon, and it will probably live. But dig up a plant and replant it in a year's time, and it will be dead. Replanting will not bring it to life again. Its energy will have been dissipated during its time of lonely isolation from the soil. The connection of the plant with the soil need only be intermittent: its communion with energy must be abiding: for a plant belongs not to the world of appearance only, but also to the world of energy.

A plant can be dug up and replanted: its connection with the soil may be intermittent, but the self in the plant is not sufficiently developed for it to cause its own intermittency. It must be dug up and replanted by an outside agency, such as a gardener, just as a stone can only be removed from place to place by an outside agency, wind or rain or force of gravity. In the animal the self is so developed that he can cause his own intermittency. He can move himself from place to place by means of his legs or wings. It seems, therefore, that he owes his superiority over the plant to the greater separation and differentiation of his parts. But this is not true. As a matter of fact, he owes the increase in his powers to his increase in reality of unity. The

difference between a plant and an animal is analogous to the difference between a village shop and a department store. The greater efficiency of the store is due not to the multiplicity of departments so much as to the unity of management. The management of the animal is vested in the brain. It is, thanks to the unity given by the brain, that limb acts in harmony with limb. The animal whose brain is drugged—a drunken man, for instance—is as helpless as any vegetable. Thanks to his brain, the animal is at unity with himself: he is at conscious unity with the world of consciousness. His contact with his channel of consciousness, the brain, need only be intermittent. He can sleep in the security of the power of consciousness stored within it. But destroy the brain and he will die. Because he is consciousness apparently separated from consciousness he must remain in abiding union with the world of consciousness.

Among the lower animals, it is true, the brain can be destroyed without immediate loss of life; but among the higher animals, in whom the brain is fully developed, such destruction results in death. Imperceptibly the lower animals merge into the higher animals, and imperceptibly the higher animals advance until they gain the right to be considered human. Exactly when an

animal can be classified as human we cannot say. Indeed, all clear-cut division is contrary to what we know of nature. Animals win their way into humanity as they gradually come to regulate their lives, not by the impulse of the moment but by purpose. It is unity of purpose which makes the perfect man, just as it is unity of intellect which makes the perfect animal.

At first the man-animal directs his life by caprice and by the impulse of the moment. Baby cries when he is hungry ; a dog tries to run away to escape a beating. But gradually the power of abstract thought induces them to regulate their lives by purpose ; their course of action is dictated no longer by direct impact of sensation upon the body, but also by the impact of thought upon the mind. Probably most of the higher animals—at least those of them which are domesticated and have men for their tutors—have some power of abstract thought. A cat, for instance, can almost certainly form an idea of the abstract quality of warmth. It threads its way along the house-tops and enters its home by an open window, lured from the fascinations of courtship by dreams of the cosiness within. But the warmth of which it dreams will minister to its bodily needs. So, although it may no longer be influenced only by direct impulse of sensation



upon its body, still its purpose is subservient to the ultimate satisfaction of its bodily desires. The dog, on the other hand, can almost certainly form an idea of the abstract quality of loyalty. He stands in lonely vigil outside the hut where his master lies wounded and helpless. Long hours are spent by him in loneliness and pain; the cold is intense; the snow falls; but still the dog waits on and searchers find him stretched out in the rigidity of death. He has died, a martyr to his sense of duty. Sooner than lose his self-respect he has preferred to die. In such an animal bodily comfort may be entirely subservient to a purpose altogether other from material considerations. In him the spirit may be free. It may have asserted itself right out of matter, and liberated itself from unreality. It may have expressed itself in its perfection. We cannot tell. For the dog as he dies at the post of duty may be thinking of past benefits received from his master. His conduct may be actuated by the memory of bodily comforts of bygone days.

Of man we can speak with greater certainty. The small boy bites his thumb to check himself from crying. He may restrain his "natural" impulse to give way to tears for many reasons. Sometimes undoubtedly he acts in obedience to a vague monitor whom he calls pluck. "Decent



chaps do not blub.” But pluck offers no bodily reward. It gives the admiration of other little boys and popular applause, it may be urged, a sufficient compensation for torn breeches and an angry mother. Not always. Sometimes a lad is plucky enough to go against the feeling of his fellows. In man the spirit can assert itself and become quite free from all material consideration. A man can be so free, so completely master of himself and his surroundings, that when parched and wounded on the battlefield he can give his only cup of water to a friend who lies by his side. Nay, but a man can do more than that. He can give his last drink to his greatest enemy and choose rather to die than fail to be true to himself. A martyr to duty is the only witness that we can call when we seek to prove that reality is not purposeless energy, but activity. But his evidence is sufficient, for he shows that spirit can assert itself right out of matter and display itself in spotless purity. Creation is a means to an end, and that end is self-production. Self-production is the prime cause of creation, and therefore the Self is divine. It only cites itself in evidence of itself. The spirit witnesseth of itself to itself. Man is self apparently separated from Self, and therefore, while he remains true to himself, he cannot die.

He passes on at earthly death to share in pure activity. The Self that shows Itself in man is God.

Man's study of himself should make him humble. When he is filled with a sense of his own importance and of the complexity of life, it is usefully humiliating for him to state what he appears to be,—clay, dust, or matter with the power of separate movement. When the marvel of machinery grips hold of him, it is good for him to remember that he makes nothing : he merely moves things from one position to another, one bit of iron here and another bit there. It is true, indeed, that he is able to interfere in the course of events, but the energy that he exerts is not really his own. It is a part of the common stock of energy, which is the motive power of all activity. All energy is one. A man's muscular strength depends on the size of his muscles. His moral and intellectual strength depend on the shape of his head. It is possible to tap a man's head in such a way as to paralyse his muscles, stultify his intellect, or pervert his morals. All energy is the same, but that need not depress us, for all energy is divine. The flowers have their place in paradise. St. Francis thought it not unworthy of himself to address his sermons to the birds and beasts.

Man's study of himself shows him probably to be sprung, not only from the animal creation, but also from the common mass of matter that is called "inanimate." The stuff that forms the world and all that is therein, men, beasts and plants and things, is of one sort: but that need not depress us. Stuff is the shape that *anima*, or soul, or spirit assumes. The soul of the world is God: in Him all things subsist. The common mass of things is not inanimate. It is inarticulate, but it is instinct with the life or self that waits for self-expression.

Man's study of himself should make him proud, for it tells him that he can win his way to freedom and find eternal life. All courage is not Dutch courage. All love is not cupboard love. There is in man a courage which does not depend upon the fullness of his stomach, but one that is the reflection of the glow that lights his soul or self. The spirit in man is doubtless the offspring of the assumption of form by energy or (if it be more correct to phrase it so) of the union of matter and energy. But it is not a by-product. It is the product which the Mind behind the universe intended to produce. It is that Mind Itself. Evolution is the unfolding of the Mind of God. In man the bud may open out and form a perfect blossom of divinity.



## CHAPTER III

### THE DEFINITION OF GOD IN CREATION

WE dare not dogmatise about the Self which is trying to assert itself in creation, for it is God, infinite and eternal, and we are men. Our thoughts are hedged about with finite barriers of time and space. But although we cannot contain the Infinite within the limit of human speech, we can apprehend God as He manifests His presence in creation. We can perceive Him as the quality of things, and we can perceive Him working in ourselves. The little boy who bites his thumb to check himself from tears is conscious of a pluck or spirit of his own. And he judges others by himself. He expects to find that same pluck in them also. Unconsciously he is conscious that pluck or spirit is the supreme manifestation of that binding quality which makes the whole world one. He knows that to sin against that spirit is to sin against the Holy Ghost. Whence that knowledge comes he cannot say, nor can any one tell him ; it comes from no place, nor

does it go to any place. It is the sum total of existence. It is God.

God, as He manifests Himself in the world, is called the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit, because He gives true "holiness" or wholeness to life. He it is in a creature Who prompts it to make little of suffering or bodily effort, but at all costs to remain true to itself. He gives life its unity and integrity. He urges men to laugh at separations and divisions as at something quite unreal and quite illusory. He prompts them to go outside themselves, that they may find themselves. From the beginning of all things He has been in creation, ever seeking to assert Himself. He manifested Himself when the first plant first pushed its roots into the soil in search of life. He showed Himself again when the first animal first fought for food with which to feed its young. The struggle for existence is hard and bitter. It leads to the survival of the fittest and the fittest for survival is the creature who is most akin to God, and who shows his kinship by his willingness to assert his true Self even at the cost of pain and suffering to his body.

The spirit is ever willing, but the flesh is weak. Man's weakness lies in his flesh: his strength is his spirit. His spirit bids him to take pleasure in adventure and fresh sensation. From the



spirit of adventure all pleasure comes. A child enjoys the crunching of a crisply baked biscuit much as he enjoys the first bite into a juicy peach. A boy takes pleasure in carving his name on some unsullied shining bit of marble, much as he enjoys a headlong dive that breaks the rippling surface of the sea. It is the freshness of sensation that pleases them. The Holy Spirit of adventure makes men take pleasure in fresh sensation. He even teaches them to welcome pain. It is the resistance offered by the biscuit that pleases the child. It is the coldness of the sea and the tang of the air, as he takes his dive, that please the boy. The hardness of the marble even is pleasant to him. So great is man's joy in the discipline of circumstance that he passes on to a voluntary discipline of self. The child who ate the biscuit cultivates his taste ; the lad who took to diving trains himself to become an athlete ; the boy who scratched his initials on the marble teaches himself the sculptor's art. When men decide to discipline themselves they find that they are obliged to "take pains" ; they find that they must suffer. Artist, sculptor and athlete, and men of every sort, impose upon themselves much hardship that they may gain perfection in their craft. But when they attain to perfection, then the hardship disappears.

“Pains” are no longer needed. The proficient craftsman is completely master of himself and of his material. Technique and paraphernalia may be forgotten. Self-conscious clumsiness disappears. The region of pure delight is attained. The proficient man is creative for the sheer joy of creativeness. He is whole and complete. He is become “Holy.”

Men begin by finding pleasure in sensation; they go on to learn the bitter joy of discipline and voluntary pain; they end by finding the bliss of self-abandonment. The perfect athlete is unconscious of his limbs: he forgets himself in the exhilaration of movement. The perfect artist lives in and for his art: he forgets himself in the glory of creation.

Men begin by enjoying things: they go on to enjoy their imperfect selves: they end by enjoying Self in Its perfection, and the Self in Its perfection is Almighty God. To suggest that the Self in man is not divine is to commit blasphemy. It is to suggest that there are more gods than one. It is to suggest that there can be more than one real purpose in existence. The Self in man is the same Self which is ever seeking to express itself by means of creation. That Self is God. The only difference between the Self in creation and Perfect Self is this: that the one is God,

militant amid the unrealities of earth, and the other is God triumphant in the reality of Heaven.

All creative action is divine. In his every creative action man gives a proof of his divinity. The gardener, for instance, can dig up a primrose from the hedgerow and, if he will, he can throw it aside to die. Thus he will thwart the Self from expressing Itself in the form of that particular plant; but if he replant It in his garden, he will enable It to express Itself more worthily than It had done if It had remained in the hedgerow. He can enable the Self to express Itself! In other words, he can perform a real creative action. He can do this because he is endowed not only with energy with which to wield the trowel, but also with consciousness which enables him to plan how best to help the plant to increase its beauty, and with love which makes him desirous of expending part of his own energy in order to give it a better chance for worthier self-expression. The gardener can put himself into his work and sacrifice himself. That is a pledge of his divinity, for God puts Himself into His work.

All the world is God's embodiment. It is made by Him and it is made of Him. It is made by Him because he chooses to use it as a means to an end, and that end is the assertion of Himself over nothingness. It is made of Him because



there is nothing else of which it can be made. He is everything. Creation does not mean the making of anything new. There is nothing new under the sun or anywhere else, for all is God. Creation merely means the assumption by eternal, infinite God of changing forms. The mind of man does not make new thought, any more than the growth of a plant makes new energy. The mind of man transmutes thought from one form to another, as the growth of a plant transmutes energy from one form to another. A plant, indeed, in popular language, may be said to make energy, seeing that it makes it useful ; it gives it shape. Similarly a man makes a table, because he gives a fresh form to ready-made wood. Or again he makes God, seeing that he makes Him apparent in his life. But the plant does not increase the common stock of energy, nor does the carpenter increase the common stock of material, nor does the saint increase the common stock of goodness. Goodness or God is infinite. His being cannot be increased nor lessened.

Man can give shape to a table and man can give shape to God. The man who gives shape to God is the man who does his duty. Such a man formulates God. He gives Him form. Sometimes duty is called "the Christ," for the Christ means "the Anointed One," and duty alone

gives unction to human life. Duty and Christ are different names for the same force, and their law is the same. The law of duty is the law that a man must at all costs remain true to himself and retain his self-respect. The law of Christ is the law that a man must be willing to sacrifice himself. Self-sacrifice leads to self-preservation. Selfishness leads to self-destruction. That is the message of Christ and of duty, for self-sacrifice means the sacrifice of bodily desire and earthly appetite, that the true self may be preserved and fulfilled; and selfishness means the subservience of the self to the body.

Duty or Christ is the definition of God in human hearts and in society. It is the Word of God which was in the beginning. It is the light which lighteth every man coming into the world. It is not hidden nor is it far off that a man should say, "Who shall go up to Heaven for us and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?" Neither is it beyond the sea that a man should say, "Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?" But the word is very nigh unto a man, in his heart and in his mouth, that he may hear it and do it. The Kingdom of God is within us. All men have a sense of duty. All men have a knowledge of Christ. All men, if they will, can follow Christ and do their duty.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE LIMITATION OF THE INFINITE IN CREATION

How indivisible God can have the semblance of separate form and definition, we cannot say. We are agnostic on this point. But our agnosticism is careless and triumphant. We point to the blueness of the sky, to the consciousness of animals and to the courage in men's hearts. The things that are impossible with struggling men are possible with perfect God. We know not how the infinite can appear in finite form : it is enough for us to know that through the finite we can gaze upon infinity and in the finite we can worship God. God manifests Himself in creation in many ways, as the quality of things, the energy of plants, the consciousness of animals and the spirit of a man. His supreme manifestation of Himself lies in a man's sense of duty. For in the man with a sense of duty, the Self is apparent to Itself. All Self or Spirit is God ; and Christ, or duty, is the revelation of God to Himself in man.

Duty or Christ is the manifestation of the true nature of perfect Self to Self as He is trying to express Himself in man. When the Self in man accepts that revelation, then God's purpose in creation is fulfilled.

We do not know how infinite God can have the semblance of definition, but we think that we know why. The reason is to be found in God's very nature. He is Love. Love drives Him outside Himself to experience Himself in creation. In Himself He is perfect. In creation He manifests Himself to Himself by means of imperfection, and, were it not for imperfection, He would have no experience of His own nature. His very perfection would prevent Him from enjoying Himself. Divine perfection, for example, involves omniscience. In reality God knoweth all things and for that very reason He cannot have the pleasure given by the acquisition of fresh knowledge. In creation He deliberately sacrifices His omniscience that He may see Himself through the eyes of a child. In Himself He would have no pleasure in action, for He is all powerful. Whatever He might do, He could never have the consciousness of effort. In creation He deliberately sacrifices His omnipotence that He may experience the sense of power in the brain and sinews of a beast. In

Himself He would have no consciousness of perfection. He would be unconscious of it, as a healthy man is unconscious of his wholeness. In creation He deliberately sacrifices His perfection, that, as a man, He may fight his way to divinity again. God goes outside Himself into creation in order that He may have experience of Himself. This is what we mean when we say that God is love.

In the world God gives embodiment to Himself ; but, if He gives embodiment to Himself, He must also give Himself to embodiment. He, Who is Reality and Truth, must deign to mingle His Being with the unreality and nothingness of shape and definition. Therefore Christ or Duty, who is the earthly definition of Almighty God, must needs be a suffering Christ, for Christ is God, apparently separated from Himself by the barriers of unreality. God so loves the world that He gives His only begotten Son to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The only begotten Son of God is yet another name for Christ or duty. When God gives to men a sense of duty, He gives Himself. Indeed there is none other gift that God can give except Himself, for He Himself is everything. When He gives Himself, God bestows the gift of immortality. The man who



“believes in Christ,” the man, that is, who believes in doing his duty and remaining true to himself, can never die. He is a son of God, in whom the Christ is perfecting Himself. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that with Him we may also be glorified. If a man would taste of his divinity, he must needs suffer and have tribulation in the world, for in the world God is a suffering God.

The world is the creation of God and there is no creation without self-sacrifice, nor is self-sacrifice possible without suffering. The artist sacrifices himself and suffers when he paints a picture, because he rends himself apart, as it were, and puts himself into his work. The labourer sacrifices his bodily tissues when he gives himself to his toil. The mother sacrifices herself and suffers when she rids herself of part of her substance to give birth to a child. But the artist sees himself again in his picture. The labourer expresses himself in his handiwork. The mother sees herself again in her boy. “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come : but when she is delivered of her child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy



that a man is born into the world." Self-expression is at once the motive of self-sacrifice and a sufficient reward for the suffering that self-sacrifice involves.

All real sacrifice is "Self-sacrifice," for God or Self is the only reality. Self-sacrifice, the voluntary death to secure greater intensity of life, is the key to the riddle of the universe. Self-assertion or self-creation comes only by self-sacrifice: that is the paradox of life.

The world and all that is therein is God's creation. It is the outcome of His great sacrificial act. Earthly love is a parable of heavenly love. In holy wedlock man and woman give themselves to one another and the result is fresh forms of life. In holy wedlock pure activity gives itself to shape or form and the result is creation. The reward of God's Self-sacrifice is the same as the reward for all self-sacrifice. By means of creation God can express Himself. Creation is the mirror in which He can see Himself reflected. Man, the climax of creation, is made in the image and likeness of God. In perfect man the Self can see a perfect picture of Itself. Activity can see Itself in action. That is the exceeding great reward of love divine.

Great is the travail of creation and long do the pains endure. For millions of years there was

no sign of morality or divinity in the world. The spirit was not free. The self had not asserted itself. The world consisted of things and things are apparently lifeless and non-moral. A landslide brings no blame upon itself for the havoc which it works. It has no self to suffer censure. Only one man has ever treated nature as inarticulate and not as inanimate, and He was a man whom many thought to be demented, the man who rebuked the winds and bade the waves be still. Not often is a plant rebuked for failure to produce a crop of fruit. There is only one record that a fruit tree has been blamed and then it was rebuked by the same man who rebuked the seas. Scarcely is an animal blamed for disobedience. It is only as he comes to have a knowledge of purpose that he begins to understand that the Self lives in him and that it is his duty to fulfil himself; but then he is called man. Man can be blamed and he can be praised for his failure or for his success, for man is conscious of the divinity within himself. He knows his duty.

The possible imperfection of possibly perfect man is a limitation that God must lay upon Himself if He would have the joy of effort and conscious action. Bitter, indeed, must be the pain of this limitation: great, indeed, must be

the joy of conscious perfection and self-fulfilment that makes God willing to endure so grievous suffering.

It is only in time and space that God suffers. It is only in time and space that He seems to sacrifice Himself. In reality He cannot do so, for He cannot lessen nor increase His Being. He is everything. He cannot really give Himself away. Separation of Self from Self is as illusory and unreal as the apparent separation of quality from quality, or energy from energy. In reality there is but one God. Christ or duty and Self or Spirit are one with God. They are God.

But though God is one and indivisible in reality, yet His self-sacrifice is real to this extent, that it seems to be real to God Himself. In this world He seems to Himself to be separate from Himself. In bitterness of anguish the God in time calls to the God in reality, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" God suffers every pang of every honest man who ever doubts his own existence and reality. A game is foolishness to players who do not keep the rules. God plays fairly. He keeps the rules of this agnostic game of earthly make-believe. He even doubts His own existence.

God is one, but He really seems to Himself to sacrifice His unity as He allows Himself



to be partially defined in human thought. He keeps the rules for the sake of the prize, and the prize is above all price. It is the joyfulness of at-one-ment. Willingly does God endure the bitter joy of a homesick child, who only realises home when home is far away. God endures the anguish of apparent separation and estrangement from Himself, that He may have the ecstasy of home coming and reunion with Himself. Creation is the perpetual going out and coming in of God. It is the ebb and flow of eternity.

God seems to Himself to sacrifice His reality and His freedom and His unity in this world of make-believe, of definition and of separation. He plays the game and He keeps the rules, that He may enjoy an experience of Himself. He would know what unity and freedom and reality may mean. He learns His lesson by seeming to Himself to fight for their attainment. He bears the agony of all creation and its joy ; He knows its effort and He wins its repose. He endures the pains of the world even as a man endures the feelings of his limbs. God flows in the river's current ; God meets Himself when the river meets the sea. God clothes Himself in the form of a lily. As a lily He spreads His petals to the sun. The sun gives life to the lily's beauty : the lily's beauty comes from God. God bares



His teeth in the tiger's snarl as He stands at bay and exults in life. He exults in life as He knows Himself in the pluck that nerves the sportsman's arm. God faces the tiger undismayed. God rejoices to know Himself in man. In man He wins His way to freedom of the spirit. He rids Himself of unreality and is victor over circumstance. As man He can contrast the bliss of pure activity with the pain and effort of the struggle that has gained it. In man God displays Himself to Himself. In man the Self is conscious of the Christ, when pluck responds to duty.

Christ bids the Self in man to spurn the dust from under him. Christ bids him welcome feeling, though feeling may be pain. Christ bids him lose himself that he may find himself. Christ orders him be brave, when bravery is mad. Christ bids him suffer cheerfully and share the pains of others. Christ bids him give himself for them and see himself in them. Christ is the cruel scourge that drives men to perfection. Christ urges men to die the willing death and lose themselves in God.

God is I AM, the Essence of the world and its Creator. He glories in the hardness of His task. Slowly He works, and carefully, and painfully. He respects the bounds of time and

space. He does no deed to contradict His nature. He keeps the laws that He Himself decrees. Tenderly He deals with those that share His Being. And what exists that does not share His Being? God is in all things, and all things only are in God.

## CHAPTER V

### MAN'S PERCEPTION OF GOD IN CREATION

THE only mentor that prompts a man to choose the good and hate the evil is duty or Christ. All men have a sense of duty or knowledge of Christ, but they cannot descry duty or Christ except as they see Him embodied in human lives or in society. The small boy who bites his thumb to check himself from crying may restrain himself from a sense of decency. Yet he cannot say what decency is. He can only point to his friends and say that decent chaps do not blub. Hence men have ever been given to hero-worship. Some men have a nicer sense of duty than their fellows and such men have always been regarded as the heroes of humanity. The Christ that shines in them serves as a torch to guide others on their way. Rightly may such men be worshipped for the Godhead that is in them.

In one such hero many of us think that we can see the divine nature in absolutely flawless perfection. Him, therefore, we identify exactly

with God. But it is not right that only those who identify Jesus with the Deity should be called "Christian." All men who are conscious of the claims of duty are conscious of the Christ, whether they call Him by that name or not. All who follow duty's call are followers of the Christ, for He is the only light of the world. No man cometh to the Father but by the Son, and there are many within the Kingdom of God who have never so much as heard of the name of Jesus. They were dead before Jesus was born, perhaps, yet they could know Christ, for before Abraham was, Christ is. Before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Christ is.

To-day some of the noblest Christians do not find in Jesus of Nazareth a perfect pattern of divinity. We, who cannot imagine a nobler character than His, can only think that those who repudiate His claims, have been shocked by some of the unworthier expositions of His life.

It is wrong and altogether contrary to the teaching of Jesus Himself to say that Christ is only to be found in Jesus. Such speech condemns all those who do not see in Jesus the fulfilment of their dreams. But it is not wrong to say that in Jesus is to be found the Christ. Whether the Christ was perfectly manifested in Him or not is a question on which men will



probably always disagree. Certainly, according to the records that have come down to us, Jesus showed every mark of absolute perfection. In Gethsemane He taught us how to pray. On Calvary He showed us how to die. He shared in the creativeness of God and could express Himself by making loaves of bread with which to feed the stomachs of the hungry as easily as by making thought with which to satisfy their minds. He was the master of Himself and circumstance. He died and rose again ; and, after He was risen, many people saw Him. All this is written in the records that we have.

These records may be true ; they may be false. If they are false, they are more miraculous than if they are true. For, if they are false, they are a description of a perfect life written by men who were deliberate liars. They are a vision of perfection that came to men who wished to deceive their fellows. Doubtless in every word they are not true. No great man lives a noble life that tales and legends do not gather round it. The character of Jesus as portrayed in Holy Scripture may be, as it were, a composite photograph of perfection, of which the elements were gleaned from many sources. That would not detract from the value of the Great Example. Rather it would perhaps enhance it. On the other hand,

there is not the smallest reason why the old traditional explanation of the fact of Jesus should not be correct. The Gospels may contain a faithful record of a perfect life which once was lived on earth even as it is described. If a perfect man were ever born, He would be perfect God, for there is none good but One and He is God. In Jesus, God may once have dwelt on earth in spotless purity.

God dwells in all men. In all men there is Christ; and Jesus was conscious of the Christ within Himself. He never sought to hide His knowledge of His own divinity, but His favourite title for Himself was "Son of Man." He never sought to hide His belief that all men are divine. He made no vast distinction between Himself and other men. The works that He did and greater works than these, He said, should be done by others also. He bade His followers aim at nothing short of perfection and He prayed that in the very same way in which He was one with the Father, so also His followers might be one with Him. The good news of Jesus is simply this, that the self in man is divine.

All men are mirrors of divinity. All men are made in the image and likeness of God, but the nearer a man reaches to perfection, the clearer is the reflection of perfect God that is given in his

life. Worshippers of Jesus believe that He perfectly displayed the image of the perfect God as perfectly as is possible under conditions of time and space. He showed, they think, what God is like. They believe that when He died on Calvary, "He suffered for the sins of the world." They believe that on the Cross He showed that it is part of God's nature to suffer for every sin that is ever committed. God does not lose His temper and become angry when a man commits a sin. Such a conception of the godhead is blasphemous, though many seem to hold it. Nothing can mar the absolute serenity of God. But He suffers for every sin that is committed. Of course He suffers, for God is the Self in every sinner. Sin is the defeat of God.

The lesson of Calvary is given not only on the Cross of Jesus. It is repeated in the life of every self-respecting man. Any decent man who sees a nasty action done by another, blushes with shame to think that human nature can sink so low. He hates to see the self enslaved to passion or to lust. He hates to see the claims of duty flouted. A small boy steals a half-crown from his mother with which to indulge his appetite for sweets. He buys the sweets and he eats them, but after he has eaten them he cannot rest in his parent's presence. His secret sin hangs like a



heavy cloud between himself and his mother's love. Whenever she mentions the loss of the money, he feels ashamed and his heart grows hard. He cannot rest at home and yet he cannot bear himself alone. He thinks that his theft escaped detection and he cannot pluck up courage to confess. It is not that he fears his father's strap. He fears his father's scorn. Then perhaps one day he happens to overhear his mother talking to his father. He hears her tell him that she had seen the money taken, but that she had not been able to bring herself to speak of it, so great had been her shame to think that a son of theirs could be a thief. The father tells the mother that he, too, had seen the theft, but he also had said nothing, because he had felt too shamed to speak ; but soon he meant to break his silence because he knew a lad's temptations and his thoughts. He knew that even now his boy was suffering behind his wall of silence, and he longed to help him to end his suffering. As the lad listens to his parents talking, he gains a glimpse of the exceeding greatness of their love for him. They are not angry, but actually in themselves they suffer, when he who shares their being commits a sin. The knowledge of the greatness of their love destroys the unseen barrier that had been keeping them apart. Into the room, where

his parents are, he rushes. In tears of joy and sorrow, again the family are at one.

The lesson of Calvary is repeated wherever there is loving sympathy with others. The man who suffers in the sins of others shows that he is at one with universal Self or God. Christ is to be found in many an agnostic's study, in many a heathen temple. He can be found sometimes within the walls of so called Christian Churches. But, best of all, He can be seen in simple homes and simple hearts. How Jesus loved all those who loved their fellows !

Any decent man reflects the light of Christ. Unconsciously perhaps, he is a lantern unto the path of many a timid traveller. The little lad who gazes awe-struck at a general's face is dreaming dreams of perfect bravery. There have been generals in whom the dreams came very nearly true, and woe unto that general who through wilful fault of his own betrays the trust of one of the little ones who believe in him. It were better for him that a millstone were bound about his neck and he were cast into the sea. The ardent student, hanging on his professor's lips, is seeing visions of perfect wisdom. There have been scholars who were not undeserving of their pupils' worship. Woe unto that scholar who wilfully perverts the truth and makes the

worse appear the better cause. The lover looking in his lady's eyes sees love personified. There have been ladies who gave a well nigh perfect reflection of self-sacrificing love. Woe unto that woman who destroys a man's belief in womanhood.

The greatest of the so called Christian Churches still retains vestiges of Jesus' unfaltering belief in the reality of man's divinity. The uneducated members of the Roman Catholic Church are said to worship our Lady and the Saints. It is devoutly to be hoped that they do worship them, for Christ dwells in the Virgin and the Saints, and He proves Himself in the martyrs. Wherever God is, there should He be worshipped. A man admires the quality of things, the energy of plants, the consciousness of animals and the pluck or spirit in his fellow men. Admiration should lead to respect, and respect fulfilled by service is only another name for worship. A man must respect the quality of things. He must not prostitute the sheen of silk and satin to base, unseemly uses. Bad art of every sort is sin. Nor must he abuse the energy of plants or the consciousness of animals. He must not allow his crops to lie ungarnered nor maim his beasts, except to serve some useful purpose. Lack of economy or waste is sin. Most certainly a man should



admire and respect and serve that highest revelation of the Self—the spirit in a man, wherever it is found : in the heroes and saints of ancient times, in the heroes and saints who are now alive on earth, above all in children. *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia.* A man must reverence the spirit in himself and never lose his self-respect. “Love your enemies,” said Jesus, and men dispute His saying to-day. They dispute it because they fail to see that their enemies are their neighbours, and a man must love his neighbour as himself. The same Self dwells in our enemies as dwells in us, and we must worship the Divinity wherever we may find It.

Just because we worship and love the Self within our enemies, there is every reason why we should chastise their bodies, if we think that such chastisement will enable the Self within them to manifest Itself more perfectly. Jesus made a scourge of cords and poured out the changers’ money and overthrew their tables when He found them turning the House of Prayer into a den of thieves. The House intended to be a place of communion between the Self in man and Perfect Self had been degraded to become a place where things changed hands for things. The Self was being robbed of Its opportunity for Self-assertion. The anger of Jesus was always excited by men

who flouted the claims of self and sold themselves for things. It is always the Self that must be worshipped. Such was His message. Once He saw some Jews trying to murder a woman's soul. They were taking away her last remnants of self respect. Jesus helped her to believe in herself again. Jesus could help men, because he believed in their divinity.

Jesus believed in the divinity of all men. Therefore He never tried to force Himself upon the Self in others. God never forces Himself upon Himself in men. That were to break the rules of the earthly game of make-believe. The purpose of creation is that the Self in man should win its own way to the Self in Its perfection. "Jesus could do no mighty work," wrote St. Mark, "because of men's unbelief." Later writers softened the harshness of St. Mark's expression, but his words were just and accurate. Jesus could do no mighty work unless men believed in the Christ who dwelt within Him and within themselves. The Self in Jesus needed the willing conscious co-operation of the Self in those who sought His aid. This is plainly shown by the method of His miracles. The eyes of the blind were anointed with spittle ; the lips of the dumb were touched ; the woman by the well was made to look at her past life through her own

eyes. Always the sufferer was brought of his own accord to find his true Self and then to employ that Self in active co-operation with the Self of the Healer. "Whom say ye that I am?" Jesus asked Peter. The Self in Peter at once responded to the Self in Jesus, and, therefore, in Peter Jesus could indeed do a mighty work. It was the Christ in Peter that made Peter aware of the Christ in Jesus.

The Self in one man must become aware of the Self in all men before God's Kingdom can come on earth as it is in heaven. Self must learn to believe in Self. That lesson is brought home to us every day of our lives. The sufferer who does not believe in his physician can reap no benefit from his physician's personality. Until he is willing to trust himself to his physician, he can only benefit by his physician's knowledge of drugs and surgery. But as soon as he learns to trust, then he can benefit by his physician's personality. It is said that a doctor who is trusted by his patient can sometimes substitute a glass of pure distilled water for a dose of morphia and the effect on the patient will be the same as the effect of the drug.

All the sin and misery of social life is due to the failure of men to perceive that God is everywhere and in all men.



If the workman would believe in the Self in his employer and if the employer would believe in the Self in his workman, then industry to-day would be unimpeded by strife. Men will not trust themselves to the Self in others, either because they are afraid, or because they cannot see clearly to discern the Self. Their inability to see clearly may be due to their own blindness. It may be due to the blindness of the other men. The other men may be so blind as to have mistaken the nature of their own personalities. They may be following after false ideals. Thus the manufacturer, so far from understanding that the Self in him is divine and that he can only fulfil himself by linking himself on to Perfect Self or God, may merely be engaged in accumulating material riches. In that case his true Self is tucked away out of sight. The man is "enclosed in his own fat." Not unnaturally the workers refuse to trust themselves to such an employer's insatiable appetite for riches. To the man's true Self they might willingly trust themselves, if they could find It. On the other hand it may be the workers who are "enclosed in their own fat." They may not even wish to be creative. They may have no desire to lose themselves in union with creative God. They may be entirely engaged with beer and women and sleep. Resenting every attempt

made by others to induce them to make the best of themselves, suspicious of the Self in their employer, suspicious of the Self in their trades' union official, they are even suspicious of the Self in their own nature and try to pretend that It is not there. Only when men open their eyes and perceive that the true Self in all men and in all things is Christ, will Christ become manifest on earth, no longer as the suffering servant of humanity, but perfected and triumphant.

## CHAPTER VI

### MAN'S PERCEPTION OF NOTHINGNESS IN CREATION

LIKE everything else in the world, man shares God's quality, for man, in common with all creation, is quality displayed in form ; and man, more than any other animal, is conscious of the quality that pervades all things. Alone of all creation, man can differentiate between quality and form ; he can value things for their appearance or for their meaning. Form, when it is regarded apart from the quality that gives it meaning, is sheer nothingness. When man, therefore, pays more attention to form than to meaning, he is allowing nothingness to actuate his behaviour, and thus nothingness gains the semblance of existence. And this is evil.

Men used to say that nature abhors a vacuum, but there is no such phenomenon as a vacuum in creation. Men used to say that God hates the devil, and their manner of speaking showed that they believed in the reality and eternity of evil.



In the reality of eternity there is no such thing as the devil. He is sheer non-existence, absolute nothingness, the opposite of God, Who is all being. Whence, then, does the human conception of evil come? We suggest that it comes from the good God, for God, we believe, hates the very idea of nothingness and unreality. He loathes the thought of contrariness to Himself. All things have their being in God, and in God's hatred of the idea of nothingness even nothingness may have the semblance of being.

The idea of nothingness is in the mind of God, and evil serves God's purpose. God allows the devil to have the semblance of being, of purpose, and of power, but the purpose that the devil serves is really God's. In reality he is as devoid of any power or purpose as is the punchball on which an athlete exercises his muscles. The punchball is the means that the athlete himself has devised for the gratification of his desire for exercise. What purpose it seems to have is the athlete's own. So, too, the devil is the means devised by God for the gratification of His desire for effort and for action. Unless there seemed to Him to be evil with which He strove, how could God have active experience of the goodness of His own nature?

As the punchball rebounds and hits the athlete

when he misses his aim, it almost seems to be alive and to have an energy and a purpose of its own. So, too, in the world the devil has the semblance of great power. Men who have a knowledge of the cults of Western Africa, men who are skilled in ancient folk-lore, and men who dabble in spiritualism and kindred mysteries, have strange tales to tell of his apparent influence. Sensitive people think that they can discern his presence in lonely spots, and we ourselves have seen devilish things. We have seen the wanton cruelty of little boys, we have seen men gleefully luring their younger brothers to evil ways, we have listened to women dissecting one another's reputation. In our own lives and in the lives of others we are conscious of the devil's apparent power. In our own lives we are conscious of the conflict between good and evil. God's punchball is a good punchball. It gives Him plenty of exercise. For the Self in man is God on earth, experiencing the joy of conscious effort; and to God, as He tries to assert Himself in man, the power of the devil seems to be real indeed. For this reason it is permissible to regard the devil as an active agent upon earth, though in reality he has no existence. It is possible to speak of his power and his purpose, though in reality he has neither purpose nor power. He is nothing.

“ There is then no Absolute **E**vil in the universe ;  
Evil is but relative ; recognise this fact also.”

God is pure activity, displaying Himself in creative action : the devil is pure passivity masquerading as destructive energy, and he owes his semblance of existence to the horror and hatred of reality for unreality, of God for God's opposite. God's character is truth ; His weapon is love ; His motive power is courage. The devil's motive power is fear ; his weapon hatred, and his character falsity. The devil is the parody of God. God is stable ; the devil also is stable. But the devil is stable because he is fixed in the unchanging rigidity of utter lifelessness and non-existence. God is stable, not because He is powerless and non-existent, but because He is all powerful and infinite Being. Whatever He may choose to be, that is He and no different. With Him is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

Midway between the perfection of Being and the perfection of nothingness man is poised, imperfect, unstable, inclining now to the one, now to the other. Imperfect man is the creature of a thousand whims. He is easily moved to unreasoning anger or despair by adverse circumstance, and as easily is he moved to unreasoning joy by the smiles of destiny. As he approaches



perfection he subordinates the lesser issues of his life to the attainment of one end. His character becomes fixed and stable and he finds salvation. Salvation does not mean safety from non-existent fires of hell. It means fulfilment or perfection or wholeness. And man, who is made of the dust of the ground and into whose nostrils has been breathed the breath of life, can find his fulfilment in nothingness as well as in God. He can cleave to the dust or aspire to the spirit.

Human nature, in common with all creation, is a compound of nothingness with God. It is quality displayed in form. A man, therefore, can find his satisfaction in divine quality, or he can find it in "the pomps and vanities of this wicked world." He can take God for his master, or he can take the devil. He can develop the real side of his nature, or he can develop the unreal. He cannot develop both together. No man can serve two masters. If a man make the devil his servant and God his master, he will win his way through to the freedom of the spirit and gain that peace which passeth all understanding, a peace that the world cannot give. He will become one with reality, for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. But if he try to make God his servant and to find his satisfaction in nothingness, God will do his bidding. God will have mercy on

human weakness and He will allow the man to find peace in nothingness and utter oblivion. The mercy of God is terrible ; for those who ask with importunity receive what they ask,—even though it be the peace of eternal death.

Man longs for peace. Not only is he able to seek for it ; he himself desires to seek until he find it. He is dissatisfied with his present condition because he is conscious of his imperfection. Though he delight in the law of God after the inward man, he sees a different law in his members. He feels that he is not perfectly good, nor perfectly bad. He owes his consciousness of imperfection to the power which came to his first human ancestors when they tasted the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked. They became “self-conscious,” as we say, though such an expression is a misnomer, for when we employ the word in ordinary talk we usually wish to imply consciousness of bodily form ; and consciousness of bodily form is the very opposite to consciousness of true Self or Spirit. Adam and Eve ate the fruit and became “self-conscious.” They also became Self-conscious in the accurate sense of the word. “They heard the Lord God walking in His garden in the cool of the day,”—

they were aware of the true Self in the world. Dimly were they conscious of His presence in their own nature. They were aware of the rival claims of duty and of bodily desire, for they had become as gods, knowing the difference between good and evil. No longer could they rest in happy Eden.

The power that Adam and Eve received when they ate the fateful fruit was the power of abstract thought, the gift of imagination. It is this power which gives to men their title to humanity. It enables them both to perceive their duty and also to dream unlawful dreams of forbidden pleasures. It enables them consciously to subserve the purpose of God and also the purpose of the devil. God's purpose in creation is to assert Himself over material circumstances. The devil's "purpose" is to thwart God. He seeks to induce the Self in man to deny Its own existence. He tempts a man to yield himself to his environment and to find his satisfaction in unreality. For this reason the devil is called Satan, that he tempts a man to sin. He tempts God in man to destroy Himself. Truly Adam and Eve were become as gods.

The ancient legend of the "fall of man"—it would be truer to call it the legend of man's emergence from the animal state—depicts Satan



as a serpent, because almost instinctively a man regards a snake as an object of fear. The man and the woman could hide themselves from the Lord God, because they were afraid ; or, in the sweat of their brow and by taking infinite pains, they could work out their own salvation. They had the power of choice. They could make fear or pluck the leading principle of their lives.

“ Before man is set life and death, and good and evil :  
And whichsoever he liketh it shall be given him.”

Not only is a man free to choose between God and nothingness, not only will he know no rest until the choice is made ; but it is the very purpose of his being that he should make that choice. In man, God tests Himself. In man, God would see the spirit consciously and deliberately prefer Itself to nothingness. Things, plants and animals have little power of choice, or none. They are compelled to do the will of God and to give themselves to their superiors and so fulfil the law of Christ. Thus the soil is meaningless except as it is used for living creatures. Plants, in their own turn, must serve their purpose as food for man or beast, and beasts achieve their end when they are used by men. But soil and beasts and plants are not invited to surrender themselves. A cabbage is not consulted before it is cooked. A horse is not asked whether he

will be kind enough to draw the plough. Self-sacrifice is forced upon things, plants and animals by their superiors. Man has no superior to exercise compulsion over him. The Self in man is divine. He can only find his true fulfilment when of his own accord he surrenders himself to God.

At each stage of the progress of creation towards humanity the self-sacrifice which makes such progress possible becomes more and more voluntary because it becomes more and more conscious. The block of wood suffers no pain when it gives itself to become a table. The plant suffers little, if at all, when it gives itself to become food ; but an animal is conscious of pain, and the nearer he reaches humanity, the greater becomes his suffering. Men and beasts are conscious of pain and they shrink from it ; nor can they be blamed ; their shrinking is the outcome of their nature. Dislike of pain is no more blameworthy than a sense of duty is praiseworthy. To know fear is no more immoral than to know Christ is moral. But men can be blamed, when they allow their sense of pain to override their sense of duty. Men can be blamed because they alone of all creation are conscious of their duty. They know that it is incumbent upon them to sacrifice their bodily desires when

these conflict with what they know to be right. In yielding themselves to fear men are yielding God to nothingness, and they know it. Each man has a sense of duty. Each man knows what his pluck or spirit would have him do. He knows,—though he rarely dares to formulate his knowledge,—that the Self in him is God and that if he would fulfil himself in God, he can do so only by self-sacrifice. God sacrifices His unity and His infinity to make Himself in man. Man must sacrifice his separateness and his earthly ties to make himself in God.

The path of duty and self-sacrifice is hard, and fear is strong. Before even our earliest ancestors appeared, fear was at work, prompting the beasts and possibly even the lowly plants to shrink from the pain and effort of self-assertion. Fear is engrained in the very marrow of men's bones. It prompts them to keep themselves to themselves and to avoid the pain of sympathy and creative effort. It tempts them to murder their true selves by inducing them to yield to the desire for bodily comfort and mental ease. Mental ease and bodily comfort reach their fulfilment in the torpor of death and utter listlessness. Thus the devil's object is attained. The self is thwarted from expressing itself. Man, the self-conscious climax of creation, is induced to value nothingness



more than Self. God in the world,—the Self in man,—is induced to attempt to commit suicide. All sin is attempted deicide.

Fear results in self-destruction and passivity. It merges a man in nothingness. Courage results in self-creation and activity ; it links a man to God. All human progress is due to courage. It is due to the pluck in a man's heart which bids him sacrifice himself that he may gain a greater intensity of life. Love of pleasure prompts a man to adventure himself, but love of adventure leads to self-discipline and voluntary pain. Pleasure kills itself and becomes pain, and pain, in its turn, kills itself and becomes ecstasy ; for self-discipline leads to perfection, and, when perfection is gained, "pains" are no longer needed. There is no consciousness of effort in perfection ; there is only consciousness of God. At last the fellowship between God and man becomes so close that the self in man becomes completely one with Perfect Self ; all semblance of division and separation is done away. Man reaches his true fulfilment when he can say to perfect Self, "Thy will be done."

God is supreme. His will must needs be done, but man can choose how he will do it, whether with willing, active, conscious, joyful service "as in heaven," or with the inert passivity that

marks the things of earth. Things are God's chattels. Men are His sons. Men share His nature, for the Christ dwells in them. They are children of royal blood and share God's kingliness. The King, their Father, can do no wrong, because whatever He may wish to do is right. A thing can do no wrong, because it can do nothing. If men would truly fulfil themselves and gain the inheritance of their divinity, they must choose of themselves to do the right. The man who prays "Thy will be done," is not praying that God's will may be accomplished by some means or other ; but that he himself may do it willingly ; he is praying that he himself may be strong enough to follow the royal road of self sacrifice. He is praying that in himself there may be strength enough for active co-operation with suffering, sensitive God. He is praying that his true self may triumph over vain desire and that he may attain to the perfect freedom of God's service. If the prayer is granted and self unites with Self, then in anguish and in ecstasy a man may cry, "It is finished : my purpose is achieved : Father into Thy hands I commend my Spirit, for I am one with Thee, and Thou art one with me."

Whether the prayer be granted or not to any particular individual, still God's will will be done. The Self that is trying to express itself by means

of creation will some day express itself in all its perfection and win its way to freedom of the Spirit. The devil is unreal. It is only in the world that he seems to have reality. He can only bruise man's heel : man's head he cannot injure. Man's head is in the heavens, but his heel is planted on the earth. On earth the devil can retard the coming of the Kingdom. He can deceive man and make him doubt the reality of God. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God," sang the Hebrew poet, and the foolishness that he had in mind was lack of moral rather than of spiritual perception. The fool says there is no God, no goal for attainment, no object for existence ; therefore effort gives no sufficient compensation for the trouble that it involves. I will seek my satisfaction in the dust whence my body is formed instead of aspiring to the Spirit that gives it life. Such a man is a fool because he allows appearances to deceive him. He mistakes illusion for reality. He takes the shadow for the substance. He accepts his body but rejects his very self. Such a man is a wicked fool because he sins against the Holy Spirit that is in him. He is aware of the paramount claims of duty, but he dares to try to deceive himself. He can deceive himself, and the Self that he deceives is God. God cannot be deceived in



reality, but He permits Himself to be deceived on earth as the Self in man. To man evil sometimes seems to be good, and good evil. Reality to man sometimes seems to be unreality, and unreality reality. When a man deludes himself, he is hoodwinking God.

Man deludes himself and therefore man is to blame for all the sins that he commits. God allows man to delude himself and therefore God is to blame for all the sins that man commits. Of course God is to blame, for the Self in man is God. God is to blame for all the failure of creation, for God is Lord of all. Especially is He to blame for His failure to assert Himself in man.

God accepts the blame. In shame and sorrow for the sin of the world He hangs upon the Cross. He hangs upon the Cross in the form of man, for man is made in His image after His likeness. Man is the climax of earthly creation.

The body of man apart from the quality that gives it meaning is sheer nothingness. It is the devil. The true Self in man is God. Man, like all the rest of creation, is half God, half devil. Hence comes the comedy of earthly life. Man, unlike the rest of creation, is aware of his dual nature. Hence comes the tragedy of humanity. Hence comes the cross on which each sympathetic man must bow his head.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RELIGION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

MAN can perceive God in the world, and he can perceive evil. He can make something of his life, and he can make nothing of it. If he make anything of it, he will make it divine, for God is everything. If he make nothing of it, he will dissolve his own identity and cease to be himself. But the Self in man is God, and, therefore, the man who makes nothing of his life is murdering God. He cannot, of course, really murder the eternal Deity, but he can thwart It from expressing Itself in his own life, and in the lives of those with whom he comes in contact. He can crucify the Christ on earth. He can prolong God's creative agony.

God in creation is activity, or purposeful energy, manifesting Itself in form. If a man, therefore, act as though God were purpose apart from energy, or as though He were energy apart from purpose, he is in intention dissolving God's nature. He is seeking to murder God. A man

thinks of God as purpose apart from energy when he denies the divinity of the energy which is in himself and in the world at large, and pictures himself and the world as the playthings of inexorable fate. But fate is only another name for blind chance, and thus the man who thinks of God as purpose pure and simple, empties purpose of all meaning. He robs God of His divinity.

The man who regards God as fate, despairs of himself. As a timid rider resigns his reins to his horse and allows his animal to run away with him, so the coward, who denies his own divinity, gives way to despair and resigns himself to circumstance. He may become so oppressed with a sense of fate's ruthlessness that sooner than endure the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, he will cast his body into the Thames in hopeless longing for nothingness and oblivion. When he despairs of himself, he despairs of God. When he yields himself to circumstance, he is yielding God to nothingness. Religion teaches a man to believe in the divinity of the energy that is inherent in his own nature, and never to despair. It proclaims that when a man has faith in himself, he can remove mountains. The mountains remain in apparent fixity only because men doubt. Jesus set a sublime example of



self-confidence. What other peasant has dared to proclaim that though heaven and earth might pass away, His words would not pass away? What other peasant has dared to prophesy that His message would spread out to earth's most distant corners?

The man who thinks of God as energy pure and simple, worships blind force. Blind force is the very negation of God, Who is Love and Life; blind force results in cruelty and death. All they that take the sword,—for the mere pleasure that comes of wielding it,—shall perish by the sword. Their weapon will turn in their own hands and rend them. They waste the energy that should have enabled them to conquer circumstance, the energy that is the motive power of love. The love that is in them becomes bereft of its motive power, and it dies. It is true, indeed, that at first such men find pleasure in the sight of the suffering of others, but soon their perverted appetite becomes jaded. They themselves become lifeless. They become lifeless because the Self no longer dwells in them.

The man who yields himself to cruelty and passion, voluntarily parts with his divinity. He loses his temper, and temper is the supreme manifestation of that abiding quality which is God. He parts with his self-control. Self-control

means control of the body by the self. If the body be not controlled by self, it is controlled by nothingness. In everyday life there is no sadder sight than the carcase of a man devoid of purpose because it is surrendered to passion, unless it be the sight of a man who has abandoned hope and despairs of himself. It is terrible to watch the crucifixion of the Christ. Religion teaches that as purpose must not be separated from energy, neither must energy be separated from purpose, for that were to murder God.

When unity of purpose and energy enables a man completely to master his bodily desires, then he is at unity with himself and therefore he is at unity with God, for God is Self. But unity of purpose and energy may be used by a man for the gratification of bodily desires instead of for their mastery. In that case he is at unity with his body and therefore he is at unity with nothingness, for the body, like any other shape or form, is sheer nothingness when it is regarded apart from the Self which gives it meaning. Such a man is called an idolater, because he judges things by their appearance. He values empty form or shape; and the Greek word εἶδος, from which idolater is derived, means shape or form. The principle by which the idolater regulates his life is called Mammon, which is a Hebrew word

for an underground storehouse where goods were hoarded when they were not in use. Apart from their use valuables are valueless. When they are serving no purpose, goods are so much stuff and nonsense. "Stuff and nonsense" is a very good description of the principle which the idolater serves, for stuff apart from meaning is nonsense. It is nothingness. Mammon is the devil as formulated by man. Devil and Mammon are different names for absolute non-existence or nothingness. Devil and Mammon derive their semblance of existence from the same source, for the devil is the bogey of God's imagination and Mammon is a bogey of man imagination, and the Self in man is God.

Just as the man who performs his duty formulates the Christ, so also the man who shirks his duty formulates the devil, seeing that he gives to nothingness the semblance of reality by making it the leading motive of his life. A man must formulate Christ in his life or he will formulate the devil. He must make something or nothing his guiding principle. He will formulate Mammon and become the slave of nothingness, unless he retain his self-confidence, his self-control and his self-respect.

The Self must always be respected and worshipped, wherever, however, and in whomsoever



It declare Itself. This is the teaching of religion. Things are of real value as a means to self-expression. Eve's apple really was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a fruit to be desired to make one wise. Of course it was all this. Eve's apple was God displaying Himself in the form of a fruit. Quality is always good. But the devil persuaded Eve to do despite to the apple's purpose and thus to abuse its quality.

The devil is subtilty personified. Eve ate of the fruit, though she was convinced in her own mind that she ought not to eat of it. She dared to argue with herself and she yielded to her own arguments. She opposed herself to what she thought to be the will of God. She ate of the fruit. Her eating taught her that apart from God there is no reality. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Man's difficulty is to ascertain the will of God. Only true religion can help him here, for true religion teaches him to base his judgments and his actions on reality. The real purpose proper to a thing is that it should be the means whereby quality may display itself. Religion, therefore, teaches man to respect the quality of things and to worship it ; for quality is God, displaying

Himself in things. Idolatry urges man to abuse the quality of things and to treat it as worthy of contempt instead of worship. Religion urges a man to train himself to exercise his mastery of things with wisdom and with love. Idolatry urges him to take pleasure in the wanton destruction of beauty. The God-fearing lad scrawls his initials on a bit of marble but he passes on to become a sculptor: the devil in a lad prompts him to rest content with destruction and defacement. The God-fearing man treasures pearls as something beautiful: the godless man casts them to the swine.

The real purpose proper to a plant is to be the means whereby energy may have the joy of energising. Religion, therefore, teaches a man not to despise the energy in the world, but to worship it and make the most of it; for it is God. The devil urges him to waste it and destroy it, to eat and drink more than he needs, to tear up living plants for the sheer pleasure of destruction, and to use his mastery of the forces of nature in destructiveness. The devil in a lad prompts him to torture animals; the lad's divinity would have him help them to employ their energy to greater profit.

The real purpose proper to an animal is to be the means whereby consciousness may be enjoyed.

Religion, therefore, teaches a man to cultivate his consciousness, for it is God's pleasure. Idolatry urges him to destroy it, to drug his body with narcotics, to dull his sensibility with cheap and trashy music and with hideous falsity in every art. Idolatry bids him rest content with the second-rate.

The real purpose proper to a man is self-creation and the attainment of full self-consciousness. Religion, therefore, prompts him to develop and respect the Self which dwells within his own being and in others. Idolatry prompts him to abuse himself and to violate the self in others, to hurt their feelings and wound their self-respect, to drag them down to the level of the mire.

Energy is divine and the proper end of all the energy in the world is the revelation of God. Man's every power is given him that he may manifest divinity more perfectly. But man in his own nature is a combination of all the other orders of creation. His purpose is human ; his consciousness is "animal" ; he shares his energy with the plants ; and all the qualities of inarticulate matter are to be found in the human frame. It is not always easy for a man to adjudicate between the rival claims of his complex nature. He can only judge aright if his



judgment is divine. The whole secret of goodness lies in this, that a man should preserve the good point of view, and the good point of view is God's point of view. Hence comes the importance which all religious leaders attach to conversion and repentance ; for conversion means a " turning round " and repentance means a " change of outlook."

Jesus attached the utmost importance to a man's outlook upon life and He described carefully where the good point of view was to be obtained. It was to be found from the same standpoint as that taken by a little child. " Except you change your outlook upon life," He said, " and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The children are pure in heart. Their eyesight is as yet undimmed by the shams and impurities of the world. They can pierce through illusion to reality. They look at the world with the eyes of God. Watch them building castles on the beach. They call to one another in happy glee. As the hours glide by, they forget their nurse, their dinner ; nay, they forget themselves and lose all sense of time and space. But they find themselves in the reality of fairyland. They are absorbed and swallowed up in creativeness and pure activity.

Through children's eyes a man can gain a glimpse of heaven.

The childlike man who keeps intact his wonder at the world, can find God everywhere. He, too, can know the freedom of the spirit and share the sovereignty of God. The Kingdom that He rules may seem but small to men whose eyes are dimmed with worldly sights. Perhaps it may consist of a little yard in a city's slum, begrimed with smoke. But to the child-like man himself that little yard may be as wide as heaven. He calls the yard his garden. There he cultivates his plants. Really the yard is paradise, the garden of the Lord, for there the gardener cultivates himself. Concern with time and space and consciousness of separation from the universal Self slip from him as he enters on his kingdom. He loses himself in wonder as he watches his precious seedlings reach maturity. The city's noise and smells grow dim and disappear, but God is there.

The children find their way to heaven because they do not value things by their appearance. They treat them, as they should be treated, as a mere means for the achievement of an end, and the end is conscious freedom of the spirit. The end is the revelation of perfect God to God in man. To the child a bit of wood may be an

ocean liner ; the nursery hearthrug may be a magic carpet flitting through the world ; the nursery floor may be an ancient battlefield or prairie-land ; a folded newspaper may be the emblem of a general's rank. Things are of little worth to children, but the demands which the children make upon themselves, and on the self in other people, are enormous. The children grow to manhood, and, as they grow, their eyesight becomes dimmed with the illusion of the world. They become wise with worldly wisdom ; they begin to rely on things instead of self. When they were young, they found their way to fairyland with little conscious effort to themselves, but, when they attain to manhood, they must take pains and endure much suffering if they would gain an insight into heaven. A man, who becomes absorbed in his work or in any project that calls him out of self, knows the reality of heaven ; but it is only after trial and tribulation that he can gain admittance to the Kingdom and lose himself in ecstasy. During all the time that he is taking pains in order to acquire that mastery of his craft which shall give him the right of entry, the dust whence his body is formed is ever inclining him to the easier ways which lead to freedom. A man need only worship Satan for an instant and Satan will unlock the door that



leads to fairyland. A man has only to abuse the quality of things and treat a stone as bread ; he has but to worship purpose by itself alone and trust himself to blind fate, as he hurls himself from lofty pinnacle ; he has but to worship blind force, divorced from the purpose that gives it sanctity, and all the kingdoms of the world are his.

The grown up man has eyes that are dimmed by contact with the world. His hearing is grown dull. He does not always recognise the devil. Sometimes he listens to his whisperings.

The devil can quote scripture and the devil does quote scripture, for the devil is the hollow mockery of God. There is nothing real about him. What reality he seems to have is a perversion of the godhead. Vice is perverted virtue. The devil is untruth personified. He tricks himself out as the spirit of adventurous love and lures men on to evil ways before they know what they are doing. A lad, for instance, is full of the zest of life and would savour all its joys. He yearns to fulfil himself and gain the freedom of the spirit. His righteous wish can only properly be attained if he follow the long and arduous path of self discipline and self denial. The devil whispers to him of short-cuts that lead to happiness, short-cuts that are easy and pleasant to the wayfarer ; and the happiness to which they lead

is satisfactory for a time. Watch the boys who choose some easy way in which to gratify their instinct for adventure. The streets that other men regard as dull and gloomy to them are highways of delight. Dancing they go their road, arm linked in arm in jovial fellowship. Glad songs they sing of revelry and mirth. Where others see a single lamp post, they see two. They leave behind them the sorry world of everyday. They have their vision of delight, and for a time it seems that their delight is as real as heaven. They cannot count, but neither could St. John, when the beatific vision came to him. The company of the faithful is innumerable. There are song and dance and joy of human comradeship in the heaven of St. John. Heaven, he tells us, is not a place of quiet decorum and solemn silences. It has the exuberant joyfulness of eternal youth. So also is the drunkard's heaven, but the heaven that the drunkard knows will turn to hell. His happiness is only for a time; it is not of eternity. He never earned his right to happiness with toil and tribulation. He bought it ready-made, and the price that he paid away, the devil claims. The price is the drunkard's personality.

The drunkard was a coward. He dared not trust himself to gain the prize of freedom.

Instead he put his faith in things. Things perish ; only the self endures and he who trusts in things instead of self will some day find that he is faced with nothingness. And this is true of all who trust in things instead of self. The business man immersed in affairs, meets with his reward ; his reward is this, that in affairs he is immersed. The connoisseur or book-worm, who values books or china above the human interest of his life, the philanthropist, absorbed in schemes that deal with " cases " and not with living men and women, the pot-hunting sportsman, the labourer drowning himself in mugs of beer, all meet with the reward that they desire. They are immersed in things, and things apart from self are nothingness. The lad who in the pride of life set out to become " as drunk as a lord " ends by becoming as " drunk as a log." He is " dead drunk," inert and lifeless, with no power of self-assertion or self-expression. He comes to hate the sight of his friends. He loses all joy in human comradeship. His one endeavour is to kill time and gain oblivion. He is tired of life. He hides himself away in lonely isolation and secretly he soaks himself in drink, hoping to forget life's misery. Soon even the power of forgetfulness slips away. Creeping snakes and whirling shapes of nastiness assail



him. He knows that they are nothingness and yet he dreads their mocking. For a mess of pottage he has sold his soul. He knows the utter hollowness of hell.

All sin is a breach of propriety. It is a diversion of things from their proper purpose. Any good gift of God diverted from its proper purpose loses its goodness and becomes an idol. The idolater robs God of His goodness ; he prostitutes himself to nothingness ; he receives the prostitute's wages, which is death. He meets with death because he is too lazy and too cowardly to fight for life. The coward may worship the power of self-expression instead of using it as a means with which to realise himself by utterance of truth. The result is always death. Thus the artist who renounces the painful effort to express the truth and contents himself with prettiness, finds that his work becomes merely pretty. It loses all sincerity and life. It becomes dead.

All men have some power of self-expression. Few are the men who cannot express themselves in language. But many men are too lazy to cultivate their power of speech. They wish to express themselves vehemently but at no trouble to themselves. They will not take the pains to search out words that would fit the meaning

in their mind. Instead they use some silly adjectives that begin with B or F and their talk becomes pointless and insipid. Bad language is bad not because it is strong but because it is so pitifully weak. It takes in vain the name of the Lord, it makes little of His might and majesty. In a meandering stream of muddy blasphemy the real forcefulness of human speech is lost. "Bad language," technically so called, is foolish cowardice, but far more foolish are the platitudes of the dowdy and the catchwords of the smart. These are frankly the cast-off clothes of other people's thought, a sorry sort of scarecrow to be an idol, but cheap and therefore common. Its worshippers are as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. They lose all power of thinking for themselves. Their mind is dead.

The coward may worship the painful virtues needed for self-realisation as ends in themselves. Chastity, sobriety, honesty and the like are only means to lead us on to God. The fool dies who worships them for themselves alone. The prosy conversation of the prig is an advertisement of death. The unco' guid is uncommonly boring.

The coward may worship the power of self recreation as an end in itself. Food and drink and dance and song are means for the achievement

of an end. Their object is to re-create man, to build up again his worn out faculties and tissues. If they are treated as ends in themselves, the result will be death. They will destroy the very things that they should have re-created. The paralysed profligate, the bleary-eyed drunkard, the mirthless cynic all show by their very outward man that they are dead.

The coward may treat the pleasant sensation that comes of the use of his reproductive powers as an end in itself. The end is death, race-suicide.

When a man is fool enough to worship the means instead of the end, he violates a good gift of God by turning it from its proper purpose. He does violence to God's economy. He has no strength left in him that he may pursue the painful path to God. That is all. That is man's only "punishment." There is no question of the angry vengeance of a disappointed Deity. The sinner has himself to blame. He has grown tired of the struggle for divine perfection. He no longer tries to reach the standard that makes divine companionship possible. "If our God is our belly our end is perdition." If we so desire we can become lost and absorbed in the dust that we crave and admire. The Self that is trying to express itself in us will leave our being and



mould Itself in fresh forms of life. It is God's law that the Self in man gain such a mastery over the bodily form in which It is displayed that at last It can find Itself completely one with pure unformulated Self or Perfect God. It is the law of nothingness that bodily desire gain such a mastery over the true Self in a man, that at last a man's identity is dissolved. A man can be a Christian or an idolater. If he is a Christian, then God will give Himself to him. The free gift of God is eternal life. But if a man tries to give himself to an idol, then also he will receive his reward and his reward is death. This is the only condemnation that light is come into the world and men preferred darkness rather than light because their ways were evil.

The purpose proper to God in this world is self-assertion out of unreality. When men are unreal and insincere, when they base their judgments and their course of action on appearance instead of meaning, when they yield to fear and allow it to turn them from their duty, then they are perverting their power of thought and acting not divinely but as devils. They are seeking to destroy the Self and the Self is God. When they waste their energy in pursuit of false gods, they are frittering away the might of God Almighty. Thus the devil's object is attained. Man, the

climax of creation, is co-operating with nothingness instead of with Being. He in whom God would see the spirit create a habitation for Itself is working for Self-destruction at the bidding of the devil.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RELIGION OF THE COMMUNITY.

MAN'S greatest power comes from his ability to co-operate with his fellow men. When he stands alone, he can do but little to conquer circumstance. Co-operation enables him to battle against the beasts. It enables him actively to help God maintain the survival of the fittest. It enables him to tame nature itself to his service. The common effort of many men was needed when Stonehenge was built. The common effort of many men was needed when the latest aeroplane was constructed. When man holds intercourse with man, the wits of both are sharpened. The accumulated wisdom of the race is a more potent factor in the fight with circumstance than all the accumulated stock of material objects. Such sacred things as the means of recreation, the song, the dance, and the feast, only become possible when man finds fellowship with man. Social life helps love directly to fulfil itself. The love that a man feels



for a maid will lead to the self-sacrifice that a mother gives to her child. The love that a man feels for his fellow will cause a man to die for his mate. The love that a man feels for his country will make a man sacrifice himself for an idea. Society enables a man to come out of himself and merge himself in a greater whole. It should provide an earthly pattern of the perfect sociality of union with God. "He who loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" Society is, as it were, a schoolmaster to train individuals in the art of unity, that they may be able to pass on to perfect union with God.

Civilisation is the outcome of man's power of co-operation, and civilisation can be a great force for good. It can also, therefore, be a great force for evil. Whether it will be a power for good or evil depends on whether it be used for its proper purpose. The true purpose of co-operation and civilisation and of all social life is identical with the purpose which lies behind all creation. It is the promotion of God's greater glory. It is the clearer manifestation of God on earth. God puts Himself into man that as man He may win His way back to Himself and enjoy the consciousness of freedom. The proper end of all social life, therefore, is the development

of individual freedom. The state exists in order to give its constituents, who are its masters as well as its members, greater opportunities of attaining to true liberty. The community can help the individual to win his way to freedom and self-fulfilment, because the community gives him his greatest—if not his only—opportunity of self-sacrifice, and true freedom comes only of self-sacrifice.

Even in the most primitive forms of social life there were opportunities of self-sacrifice, but the self-sacrifice shown by primitive man differs little from that shown by the animals and typified even by the plants. Thus a plant sucks up energy from the soil and creates itself, only to disburse the energy, that it has acquired, in seed formation. By its sacrifice of self it finds itself again in the fresh plants that spring from the seed of its substance. Thus it fulfils itself and completes its purpose. Similarly an animal hunts for its food and fights for its life, only that it may use its life for the propagation of its kind. Similarly again, primitive man willingly endures much pain and hardship, and the motive of his endeavour is to be found in the children who spring from his loins. In the sweat of his brow he cultivates his fields and at the risk of his life he hunts for his prey, not only for his own sake but

also for the sake of his children. Primitive man, like the plants and animals, sacrifices his bodily substance. As he advances in social art, the demands made upon him become ever heavier. Society forces him to sacrifice not only his body but his mind and purpose. It compels him to subordinate his likes and dislikes to the general will of the community. He should reap the reward of his self-sacrifice in an ever increasing width of freedom. Which is more free, the savage, who is at liberty to indulge his every appetite, or the citizen, who is tied and bound by the laws of the state? Which is more free, the loafer lounging at the corner of the street or the alert and upright soldier who is tied and bound by discipline? The citizen may be vastly more free than the savage. All the resources of civilisation are his to use, means of communication, commerce in ideas and things. The soldier may be vastly more free than the loungeur. Discipline has taught him the arts of self-defence and attack. He is better able to impress his will upon his surroundings. But soldier and citizen will only be the freer if the law by which they are tied and bound is the law of God. The law of God is the law of voluntary self-sacrifice and life. The law of nothingness is the law of compulsory self-sacrifice and death. Self-sacrifice of some sort



is inevitable in social life, but either it can be compulsory or voluntary. When civic discipline is enforced upon an unwilling people the result is tyranny. Individual initiative is destroyed. The self in individual men is murdered. Whether civilisation makes for the freedom or the slavery of the citizen depends on whether it is inspired by Christianity or numbed by idolatry.

A creature ceases to be regarded as merely animal and becomes worthy of the name of man, as soon as its life is unified by its obedience to one purpose. So also unity of purpose converts barbarism into civilisation. The community needs to be conscious of a common purpose which shall give its sanction to public life ; but just as the individual can follow after false gods, so also can the state. The individual can worship energy apart from purpose : the state can set up aimless efficiency as its idol. It can concern itself more with the machinery of life than with life's purpose. It can concern itself more with the means than with the end. The result is death and Self-destruction. In such a community a factory operative is regarded as a "hand." His only task is to move his limbs from one position to another. No demand is made upon his Self. He is not allowed to put himself into his work, but only his body. He

may put his shoulder to the wheel and his back into his job, but he may only put his Self into a pot of beer or anything else that will keep It quiet and drown It. What pride can such a man have in craftsmanship ? What love can he have for his work ? He can have no love for it ; for love comes only of self-sacrifice, and he is refused all chance of sacrificing himself by that very community which exists only that it may give to the individual greater opportunity for true self-sacrifice and self-fulfilment. Men's bodies are offered up on the reeking altars of the state where mere efficiency is worshipped, but the only sacrifice acceptable to the great I AM is Self.

Again the state can worship purpose only, divorced from energy. The result is a relapse to the slavery of savage barbarism. When anarchy prevails, licence usurps the place of liberty ; and justly so, for anarchy is the counsel of despair.

Again the state can worship Mammon. If the community worship civilisation as an end in itself and forget the true end which provides its justification, then all the elaborations of civilised life will merely serve as so many fetters with which the individual is tied and bound to the circumstance from which he is trying to escape.

“The love of money is a root of all evil,” wrote St. Paul, and what is money but the typical means of securing the amenities of civilised life? When the state makes money its standard of values, the end is death to all individuality in the citizens. The Mammon-worshippers content themselves with the demand that those who do an equal work should receive an equal wage. Such a prayer is foolishness; it leads to nothing real. Really it is unimportant whether or no the last comer receive the same wage as those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. Real work cannot be paid for in money. Real work demands no payment in kind, for real work is man’s highest privilege. The craftsman makes a reproduction of himself. He sees himself in creation. The craftsman who puts himself into his work is enjoying an experience of divinity. Who ever thought of tipping God for carrying on His job, except perhaps the commercial humorist of hymn-book fame, who regards good works as a safe thousand per cent. investment? Who ever thought that Milton’s works were really paid for when Milton was kind enough to accept some money from his publisher? Who ever measured our sailors’ and soldiers’ work by the pittance that the state allows them? Not equal wages for equal work, but manly work for manly



people, such should be the aim of the state. Nay, its aim should be yet higher. It should provide for Gods a work that is divine. Each citizen should have a chance really to put his very Self into his work, or he will be a thing, a chattel, a cog in a machine. His servitude to circumstance may be disguised by a show of political freedom. He may be given a vague, occasional, delegated influence on distant parliaments. Such a gift is a stone and what the citizen needs is living bread. He needs a better chance to sacrifice himself. He needs to feel that he has some little say in the direction and management of the trade in which he is employed. He needs to feel that somehow his trade is his creation, that it is really his. The citizen is a son of God. He shares God's nature. Like God he desires to put his very Self and not only his body into the work in which he is engaged. He wishes to engage himself in it and to learn the bliss of pure activity.

Unless it be inspired by right purpose, civilisation is nothing and does no good. The co-operation of many men built up the ancient systems of slavery. The co-operation of many men built up the industrial systems of to-day. . . . The state and civilisation and man's power of co-operation are nothing at all unless they be the

means whereby God may be able to display Himself more perfectly. The state will do good, and it will be good, only when it consciously worships not Mammon, nor efficiency, nor licence, but God, the divine Self, Which is trying to express Itself in each individual citizen. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. All institutions were made for men : men were not made for institutions. Civilisation is the greatest institution in the world, and, like all other institutions, it is meant to be man's servant, not his master. The only standard of values worthy of the state is the Self in man.

The religion of the state should do for man, the social animal, what is done for him as an individual by his personal faith. It should help him to be like God. Men forget the magnificence of social service, even of the most menial sort, unless it is kept clearly before their eyes. All self-denial for the sake of others is divine if it be voluntary. God denies Himself, when He limits the range of His activities in time and space. When men voluntarily deny themselves and voluntarily limit the range of their activities in social life then they are fulfilling their divine function. They cannot avoid denying themselves because their powers are limited by finite circumstance. A man, for instance, cannot be in two places at

once. If he decide to stay at home, he denies himself the pleasure of going abroad. If he decide to be a bishop, he denies himself the glory of being a general. The religion of the state should help men not only cheerfully to accept such self-denial as is inevitable, but it also should induce them voluntarily to deny themselves and to limit the range of their activities in the interests of the community. Thus the state religion will help men to improve their likeness to the Pure Self, Almighty God, Who voluntarily imposes limitations upon Himself in creation.

All progress comes of self-denial. Specialisation of function is as necessary to the community of men which forms a part of God's body, as it is to the community of germs which makes up the body of a man. It is unwise to dogmatise about germs, but about man, considered both as an individual and as a social animal, we may dare to be more dogmatic, for we ourselves are men. Probably a germ is unconscious of its self-denial when it limits the range of its activities and consents to specialise in any one direction, but certainly man is conscious of his self-denial when he specialises in any one direction for the good of the community. The lady who specialises in cleaning door-steps is apt to envy the parasite of society who spends her life in happy generalisa-



tions. The door-step girl quite certainly will deny herself unwillingly unless she understands the sacred nature of her holy task. The state religion should give a halo to the door-step girl and make it plain that the commonest task is as holy as any other. It is, indeed, essential to the general purpose of the community.

In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and earth. In society there are men whose muscles are stronger than their intellects, and other men whose brains are good but who are themselves devoid of strength of character. Such men must needs occupy a secondary position in the social scheme. Public religion should make it plain that the community takes no account of the quality of the contribution made by the individual to the common weal. Quality is the concern of God, for it is God. He pleases to manifest Himself in different ways in flower and animal and man. And the revelation of God in any one man differs from that which is to be found in any other. How He may deign to manifest Himself is His concern, not ours. Quality is not the concern of the state.

But quantity is the concern of the state, for quantity is an affair of the finite world. Public religion should insist that each individual must give all of the quality, that is in him, for the

common good. Only so will the state fulfil its function and give to every one of its members the fullest chance for self-sacrifice and self-fulfilment. It should catch up the most menial employment into the common policy and teach men to work not with eye service as men-pleasers, but as doing the will of God from the heart. It should proclaim that any action well and truly done is, by the method of its doing, divine.

In the community, as in any other organism in which God manifests Himself, specialisation of function is only a means to an end. The reality of progress lies not in differentiation of function, but in unity of being. This truth was always on the lips of Jesus and of His great interpreter, St. Paul. The Self in one man is divine : the Self in all men is divine : in the Self or God lies the real unity of the human race. In God humanity is one man. The solidarity of the human race in God is the basis on which public religion rests.

Because the Self in all men is divine, one man cannot enjoy himself without causing enjoyment to the Self in others. If a man drink a pot of beer and use it as a means for his self-enjoyment, he will become more witty and jovial, and others, also, in whom the Self is present will share in his enjoyment. If a man drink a pot of beer and use

it as a means to drown his sorrow and deaden his sensibility, then he will merely depress the enjoyment in others. Nor can a man suffer without causing suffering to the Self in others. A sympathetic soul endures, perhaps, almost as much agony in watching the agony of others as he suffers from the pain that he endures in his own person.

The world is one in God, for the Self in all men is divine. That was the message for which Jesus lived. That was the message for which Jesus died. On Calvary He set the great example. "And I, if I be lifted up," He said, "will draw all men unto Myself." The message that He sought to give was not a message of solitary suffering but of sympathy. On Calvary was enacted not merely the passion of Jesus but a wonderful example of the compassion of the universal Self or Christ. But man's natural laziness—the call of dust to dust—has made a travesty of the message of the Cross. With every outward mark of piety a man is apt to say that he may by no means dare to trust to himself, that is, to the Christ within his being: he says that he dare only trust to the Christ outside himself, and, grovelling before the cross of Jesus, he expects Another to clear for him the path to heaven. Thus the Cross, so far from being the



symbol of human unity in God, becomes a dividing line between Jesus and ordinary humanity. When men commit idolatry and worship the incidents of Jesus' life instead of its meaning, then they assert that because Jesus was lifted up, all other men must fall away from Him and lie prostrate on the ground. This cowardice they call humility, but the truly humble man trusts to the Christ within his being, the true Self, because he knows that the true Self is not the self that it sometimes seems to be, but God.

All that is real is God. There cannot be two Gods or two realities. If the Self in man is real it is God. The truly humble man knows this. He knows that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing; but he also knows that though he be less than the least of all saints, yet in him, that is in his flesh, goodness or God makes a temporary and temporal dwelling for Himself. Of every action that he performs, a humble man will say: "It is not I, who did it, not I as I seem to myself to be, but the great I AM, Who is using my apparently separate existence as a means of asserting Himself over nothingness."

The humble man bows before the cross of Jesus in lowly adoration of the Hero, Who held aloft the torch to all humanity, and, marvelling that human nature can reach to such great heights, he

remembers that he himself is also human. He dares to pray that even to him may strength be given to fill up some of what is lacking in Christ's suffering. In wondering amazement a man recognises the divinity of himself and therefore also the divinity of others. He dares to respect or worship himself and therefore he dares to worship the self in others. The demands that he makes upon himself are "superhuman," they are infinite ; and therefore the demands that he makes on the self in others are also infinite. To Jesus the cross was the binding link that makes the world at one in God. So should it be to the individual. So should it be to the community. It is the sacramental sign of the sacredness of mutual service.

Christianity, the religion of the cross, expects its followers to lose themselves that they may find themselves. It would not have them seek for an eternity of separate, individual existences after death. That were to set a bound to the boundlessness of God. No fence can be erected in eternity between the infinite I AM and aught that is . . . And even amid the illusions of the world Christianity unites the separate strivings of little lives and gives a real sanction to society.

## CHAPTER IX

### ORGANISED RELIGION IN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY

It is the whole duty of man to be a means whereby God may consciously manifest Himself upon earth. To this end a man must direct his every power and all his energy. The task is "superhuman": it is divine, for it means the realisation by man of his divinity. Hence comes the human need for prayer. As the plant thrusts its roots into the soil in search of the vitality with which to create itself and maintain itself in being, so also immortal man must thrust the tendrils of his mind into infinity and gather in the strength which shall give him eternal life. Christ is the vine; we are the branches. Christ is the channel of eternal life for men, even as the soil is the channel of energy for the plant. The plant can be lifted from the soil by a gardener and yet not lose its life, if it have stored within its structure sufficient energy to serve its needs until it be replanted and reconnected with the soil. A man



can commit a thousand sins and fritter away his life in nothingness and yet not die eternally if only he have alive within his being a tiniest gleam of respect for self and duty. While there is life there is hope. God longs to assert Himself in each member of the human family. That is His purpose in creation and man's duty is to co-operate with God and willingly to carry out His purpose. To this end, a man must ever bear in mind the will of God, and, lest he forget, he will form some rule of life which shall help him to remember. He will say his prayers regularly, for instance ; he will be careful to make a contact with Christ at definitely stated times, lest the divine strength in his being be diminished.

A plant draws its energy from the soil, we may suppose, unconsciously ; but man is conscious. Consciously, therefore, must he formulate the Deity. By conscious effort he must cleave to Christ. Hence comes the duty of formal prayer and discipline. It is not easy for finite man to concentrate his thought upon infinity, and, while he inhabits a body, he cannot concentrate his thought without the aid of formal, finite means. For the beginner certainly, for all men probably, meditation on holy things is made the easier when the gaze is fixed upon the picture or the image of a saint. Thus a schoolboy

looking at his mother's photograph or at the image of our Lady, finds himself strengthened by thoughts of love and home and purity ; and, as he focuses his gaze upon the picture, he finds it easier to keep his thoughts from wandering. Not only meditation but all forms of prayer, self-discipline and self-denial need definite rules, and also material means for their accomplishment. A man, for instance, may adopt a special pose for prayer : he may train himself to self-control by periodical abstention from some harmless luxury.

And even the duty of self-examination cannot be carried out without material means. God must be formulated in finite terms before men can understand Him. Infinite God in all His fulness is incomprehensible in finite man. Where, then, is the standard by which men may measure themselves ? Why, surely in the heroes of their race, alive and dead, in whom the Godhead is apparent ; and, best of all, in Jesus, for all men, who have read of His life and doings, acknowledge that He is at least a hero. Each man should, therefore, make a serious study of the lives of great men and search the scriptures of humanity. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever

things are lovely, whatsoever things are gracious or of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, let us think on those things.

But who shall say where praise and virtue lie and who shall decree what is of good report and gracious ? Men crave for an infallible book or for an infallible society that shall tell them. They erect some little oracle and think that they can save themselves the trouble of thinking for themselves, but really this is impossible. The self cannot be balked in this way. It is a man's own self which makes him willing to accept the judgments of a book or of a society. Man's only guide in action and in theory is his sense of duty. Deep calls to deep. The spirit in a man goes out to welcome Christ wherever Christ is found, if the man's spirit can escape from the trammels of tradition and of second-hand authority. Evil communications corrupt good manners and good communications improve evil manners. A man's whole duty is to follow up the best he knows and ever to keep his ears alert to hear God's messengers. If he be awake to righteousness then he will sin not. He can safely trust himself to that only Self which is infallible. But if he deaden his sensibility by dallying with what he knows to be the second-rate, then his eye-sight



will become dimmed and he will not be able to discern the Spirit, when It speaks to him.

The plant draws its nourishment from the soil. Man draws his nourishment from the Christ, wherever Christ may be exemplified. But there is poison in the ground as well as nourishment. A plant can suck up poison instead of vital force. There is nothingness as well as Being in infinity. A man can feed himself on Christ, and he can also starve himself to death with nothingness. God manifests Himself in many ways, in the glory of the sunset, in a picture or carving, or in any imagining of loveliness, a statue or a book. He manifests himself most perfectly as the Christ in a human life. But when men value the statue or the book or the sunset, for the form alone apart from the quality that gives it meaning, then they commit idolatry and starve themselves with nothingness. When they value a human exemplar of the Christ for the mere incidents of his life apart from their meaning, then again they feed themselves on nothingness and commit idolatry. And this is true of the way in which men use that most perfect pattern of divinity, our Lord. Such men as wrangle about the manner of His birth, or the manner of any of His actions, commit idolatry. The life lies in the meaning, not the mode. Formal religious rules

are necessary for the health of every soul who lives within the limits of a human body. But every soul that is clothed in bodily form is liable to make more of the form than of the meaning of his religious exercises. Such a man becomes the slave of formal systematised idolatry.

As with the individual, so also with the state : society must define its faith in a religious system, if the state is to fulfil its functions. Just as the higher animals co-ordinate their powers by means of the brain, so also society co-ordinates its powers by means of its organ of government, be it parliament or what you will. If society had no centralising organ of control, it could not rightly be called society, nor has it any real claim to that title unless its organ of control be animated by consciousness of purpose. Consciousness of purpose differentiates a man from a beast and consciousness of purpose differentiates society from barbarism. Unless the members of society are aware of a common purpose which unites them, they are as sheep going astray ; every man turns to his own way.

Just as the individual formulates his purpose in thought, in order to secure that unity of action which his brain demands of his limbs, so also the state should formulate its purpose in a religious system if it would secure a willing

performance of those duties which its parliament imposes upon its constituents. Weakness follows or imbecility when a man's brain wars against itself for lack of one coherent purpose : when parliament is at loggerheads with itself, anarchy follows or revolution. A religious system is as essential to the state as thought is essential to the individual. And just as the individual gives expression to his thought by words and deeds that symbolise his ideas, so also the state gives expression to its religious system by means of public worship. Jesus Himself admitted the necessity of a religious system and of public worship when he told the leper whom He had cleansed to offer the gift which Moses had commanded as a testimony unto man.

It is of no great importance possibly that one man should convey to other men the thought that is in his mind. They are the spectators, and only to a limited extent the partakers, of his life. But it is of vast importance that the state should proclaim its purpose to its members. It is of importance just because the members of the state are members of the state and not merely its critics. Public worship fulfils for the body politic that function which is fulfilled in the body of a man by means of his nervous system. It is by means of his nervous system that a man



impresses his purpose upon his limbs. It is by means of public worship that the state impresses its purpose upon its members. Public worship is as essential to a healthy constitution in the community as a nervous system is essential to a healthy constitution in an individual.

When a man expresses his thoughts in words, he finds that he attains to greater clearness than he had while his thoughts remain unformulated. When society voices its aspiration in public worship, that aspiration becomes intensified. Soldiers fight the better for singing a jolly chorus on the way to battle. They need a jolly sentimental song with which they may assure one another that each man is feeling the same inexpressible things as are felt by his mates. Such foolish doggerel reassures the men and increases their ardour. It expresses hopes and dreams that go too deep for words. It gives each man the assurance that in the impalpable things of the spirit he does not stand alone. Public worship is the war-cry of society.

The very weakness of the soldiers' sentimental songs is a sign of youth and life and hope and promise. The schoolboys who yell out "Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" exult in the foolishness of the words and in their utter powerlessness to express with any nicety of

precision the inexpressible things that lie in the heart of man. Public worship should be the unifying, inspiring battle song of society, and, indeed, whenever social life has been most vigorous, men have always trolled out a lusty chorus to God, not caring greatly for any verbal accuracy of expression. The old men have dreamed dreams and the young men have seen visions. The sons and the daughters have prophesied. The words of the song that society sings as it marches on its way to the living God are of no great importance, provided that it be remembered that they are of no importance and that they be treated as a means to an end. Many and varied have been the shouts of praise that men have sent up to the God of life. Some sort of song society must have, if it is to remain conscious of the goal at which it aims. The goal will be ignored if there be nothing to keep it in men's minds. For the goal lies over the hills and out of sight. Quite literally it is out of sight, for the way leads to that state in which men shall need no sun to lighten them ; it leads to the plane which is outside time and space and every sort of circumstance. It leads to God, *quem nosse est vivere*, to know Whom is to live.

The religious system of society is, as it were,

a darkened glass through which society may gaze upon the Almighty with unblinded eyesight. It provides that amount of religion which society needs at any period of its pilgrimage to God. Such limitation is valuable, but it is as unreal as the finite world to which it belongs. It is impossible really to isolate one bit of religion from all religion, for religion is a permeating quality. It is infinitely more absurd to think of the presentation of Christ given by any religious system as the complete Christ than it is to think of a cupful of water from the river Thames as the whole Thames. But a cup of Thames water is often useful for practical purposes. Similarly, a religious system is useful as a means to an end. Indeed, it is essential, for without its aid society is as incapable of perceiving God, as is an individual who does not define God in thought. The cup is not an end in itself. If society forget the comparative worthlessness of her religious system, and value the cup above its contents, then she is committing idolatry. She is worshipping the material means instead of the spiritual end. Her preoccupation with the means diverts her attention from the end that she should keep in view. She becomes blind, and "if thine eye be evil, the whole body shall be full of blindness." So far from helping men to realise themselves in God,



society will lead them astray. When the blind lead the blind both will fall into the ditch.

Whenever society begins to treat her religious system or the conventions employed in public worship as of importance in themselves then the spirit of Christ leaves them. It is time for Him to die, that He may be born again into another system that shall lead men nearer to God. The Comforter must come in another form that He may lead men into all truth. The Christ has always been willing to die, but men have ever tried to check Him. The Christ has always been willing to set the example, but men have ever been unwilling to receive the lesson. Dust calls to dust, and the call of duty sets a man at variance with family connections and with the pleasant ways of former custom. As soon as Jesus began to teach that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and chief priests, Peter took Him and rebuked Him. There has always been some Peter to mind the things of man instead of the things of God.

There have always been men who set greater store by the system than by the life that inspired it. The system lingers on after its work is accomplished only to become an object of idolatry and the empty breeding-place of empty fear. The tried and precious stone of strong

foundation becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.

Religion is as old as the hills and as widespread as the oceans, for it is the link between Reality and creation. It is the manifestation of the self-sacrifice of God Who gives Himself to creation and thus enables creation to exist. Indeed, there can possibly be but one true religion, for true religion is a manifestation of God's unique character. It is as absurd to speak of religions in the plural as it is to use the plural of any other manifestation of God. It is as absurd to speak of religions as it is to speak of courages or braveries. People talk and try to think in such a way because they like to think that they have a religion that is quite distinct and separate from others, a sort of private entry to the courts of heaven kept most exclusively for the favoured few. Thus in England there are many who think that true religion was invented by Henry VIII. or Cranmer; others think that it was invented during the earthly life of Jesus; others think that it was invented in Abraham's time. This common belief that true religion started in the Jewish Church is strengthened by the excessive prominence given to the old Hebrew Scriptures in our present scheme of public worship. But one of the stories that have clustered

round the birth of Jesus throws a golden light on the world-wide, world-old claims of the religion of which He was the great exponent. It is the story that tells how among the first to worship the Babe were wise men from the East who had been led to the cradle at Bethlehem by the light of their own "heathen" religious system.

There is only one religion and that is the Christianity which Jesus preached—the religion of self-sacrifice, but there have been many religious systems in which that one religion has been displayed. And in each system, side by side with the true religion, there has also existed its parody, idolatry. To find the origin of religion in the world, it was necessary to discuss the origin of the world; to trace the history of religion it will be necessary to consider some of the systems in which religion has displayed itself. It will be necessary to consider the origin of any such thing as a religious system among men.



## CHAPTER X

### THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF ORGANISED RELIGION

THE history of civilisation is the story of the dealings of man with man. The origin of civilisation, therefore, must be sought in that process by which mankind is multiplied, the process of generation and child-birth. The flower seed falls upon the ground : when once the seed is formed, the parent plant has no further duties : the seed falls wherever it may have been carried by wind or insect. The lower sorts of animals have duties that are little more arduous than those of the plants : they produce their eggs and have only to choose some suitable spot in which to deposit them. But, as they become more and more refined, animals must pay an ever-increasing attention to their offspring, till at length the human parents give their children whole years of loving care. For several years after birth one human being is entirely dependent on another. From this dependence springs the organisation of society.

It is impossible to speak of the early development of society with any certainty. Did men first go about together in packs or families? Was matriarchy the precursor of patriarchy? Did states grow out of villages and villages from families? Who can say? Those who are learned in such matters change their theories every week.

Nor can we say how man first found the use of things. His finding was partly the result of chance, partly of his reasoning powers, and partly of his aesthetic appreciation of beauty.

Man makes a store of grain against the winter, and, when he is delayed in eating it until the spring, he finds that it has sprouted. Later he learns to clear a space of ground and deliberately to sow the seed. So husbandry begins.

Man pets some animal that he had caught for food, makes it his companion and takes it with him as he goes from place to place. It becomes his own. He is willing to fight for its possession. Thus not only pastoral life but private property have their origin in man's aesthetic fancy for a little animal, or, as perhaps some socialist might say, in the cruelty which prompts a man to tease his victim, much as a cat plays with a mouse that it means to devour.

Man sees a log floating down a river. Later he learns to hollow it out and learns the art of

navigation. The cool of overshadowing trees and the warmth of the underground caves lead him to find out the art of building houses. Thus he learns the art of construction.

Man makes a noise to express his pain or pleasure or in mimicry of natural sounds. He passes on to mimic his fellows. Thus language begins, and language is the beginning of civilisation.

But all such theories are the result of guesswork. We know as little and as much of the origin of civilisation, as Charles Lamb knew of the origin of roast pork. We cannot say when it began, if indeed it can be said to have had any beginning apart from the beginning of the world. "The *whole creation* groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The whole creation is one, and cause produces effect quite imperceptibly.

Probably the religious sense of human beings is partially shared by animals. In the carollings of birds may perhaps be found the germs of worship, for birds by their carollings and circlings proclaim their joyfulness in life. The spontaneous utterance of their joy is the forerunner of deliberate worship. And in the joyfulness of animals even the plants may dimly share. Quite possibly the sunflower turning to the sun is more than merely a type of man rejoicing in the Creative Spirit.

Probably not even the higher animals have that



power of distinguishing between themselves and anything "else" which is essential to the worship of any "other" Being. Yet there are men who say that not only a vague thankfulness for life, but also conscious expression of thankfulness to the Life-giver, may be found in animals. They affirm that a dog baying to the moon is engaged in a conscious act of worship. Just possibly they may be right.

As far back as we can go in the annals of our race we find that man has always been consciously religious. In primitive human burial-places, animal bones may still be seen, carefully arranged by the side of the human skeleton. The departed warrior should not lack food in the happy hunting grounds beyond the grave. From the very earliest times primitive man seems to have had the assurance of the continuity of existence after earthly death. And this is not surprising. As soon as he became able to think, one of the first phenomena, which must have made him pause for reflection, would have been the sight of a dead body. Here lies the body of a man, he might think to himself, inert and helpless. Where has its power of movement gone? In what did its power of movement consist? Where does the power of movement reside in myself? In my body? No, for here lies a body devoid of power. It must reside in something mysterious,

invisible as the mighty wind, something which for a little space of years inheres in human bodies. Such was the line of thought, perhaps, which led men to endow themselves and others with a mysterious causative force, vague and powerful, intangible as the "spiritus" or breath, from which its name is taken. Hence, among primitive peoples, the dead are the subject of veneration and of worship. Especially worthy of worship are men deemed to be, when their death occurs in the course of nature and not from accident or cause of war; for in such cases the savage mind can find no reason why the spirit should decide to leave the body. So wide-spread is the worship of the dead among simple folk, that it is asserted by some scholars that in that worship lies the historical origin of all religion. Perhaps this view may be correct, and yet it is not wise to be too dogmatic. Conscious religion may have originated in different ways among different peoples. We cannot say for certain how the conviction came to man that he was more than a perambulating mass of matter. But whence that conviction came we think we know. It was the gift of God, just as also a man's consciousness of his body is a gift of God. Indeed consciousness, like any other manifestation of quality, is a manifestation of God. Really it is

no more wonderful for a man to be conscious of his soul, than it is for him to be conscious of his stomach. Indeed, it is less wonderful, for his soul is his true self. Self is divine ; it is the only reality. The stomach is an organ of the body, and the body apart from the quality which gives it meaning, is nothingness. It is more wonderful for man to be able to perceive nothingness than it is for him to be able to perceive Being. It is not wonderful for God to be aware of Himself, but it is wonderful that God on earth—the self in man—should be oppressed with a consciousness of nothingness. The Man who was absolutely convinced of the greater reality of spirit than of form was accused of blasphemy, when He acted according to His conviction. “ Who can forgive sins but one, even God ? ” His opponents asked Him. Straightway He answered, “ Whether is it easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven ; or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk ? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.” Great men have never doubted the reality of the spirit. From the earliest times all men, worthy of the name of men, have known their own spirituality.



Having the conviction of his own spirituality, it was natural that primitive man should find spirits everywhere; for everywhere he saw things happening. Rivers overflowed their banks and wrought death and destruction in the countryside. Rotten boughs fell from trees and killed the wayfarer. Mountains shrouded themselves in mist and swallowed up the traveller. The sun came forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber and rejoiced to run his course, bestowing the gifts of life and warmth and fertility wherever he cast the light of his countenance. Man argued from the analogy of himself. He only killed when he was angry or hungry. He only bestowed gifts when he was replete with food and happiness. His every conscious action was an outward sign of the inward feeling of the spirit. So he found a spirit in every tree and hill and river. He found a spirit in the sun. Thus he found a cause for every effect. He endowed each thing with a spirit to account for its apparent actions. He was like the modern child who stamps upon the nursery floor and calls it "naughty," when he falls down upon it and hurts himself. Even in grown-up people primitive feelings are still strong, as anyone knows who has ever hit his thumb with a hammer. "Confound that hammer," we say, as we drop

it angrily on to the floor. Men are still apt to endow each separate thing with a separate spirit of its own.

The spirit-religion of primitive man is called Animism. It contained a primitive sort of Christianity which was not so different from the Christianity of later days as might be supposed. Write spirit in the singular with a capital S instead of in the plural with a small initial letter and you arrive at a Christianity which bears some resemblance to that of Jesus Himself.

Primitive man was impelled to give expression to his religion by the promptings of Christ, the spirit of adventurous love. Christ is ever urging man to go outside himself and merge himself into a greater whole. Christ is ever urging him to use his best gift,—sociability. Shyness is merely a form of foolish fear. It was as “natural” for primitive man to wish to tell others of his religious experience as it is for a child to cry when it is hurt and to laugh when it is pleased. It was as natural for him to pour out his religious emotions into the ears of any listener as it is for the occupant of a third class railway carriage to give his fellow travellers an elaborate account of all his joys and hopes and sorrows. The result was public worship. Animism or Primitive Christianity expressed itself in a form of public

worship known as Taboo. Taboo enabled men to take the first steps along the road that leads to God. It taught them the elements of self-discipline at a time when such a lesson had seemed to be almost impossible.

Primitive man has no power of generalisation. He puts a separate spirit in every tree or hill or river to account for every action that he sees. The large number of words for things of the same sort but of slightly different kinds and the absence of any word to denote a whole class of things, which are typical of such primitive languages as are still in use, show that the power of classification comes quite late in human development. For instance, if a man had one word for a sour red apple, and another for a sour green apple and a third for a sour russet apple and a fourth for a sweet green apple and a fifth for a sweet red apple, and yet another for a sweet russet apple, but no word at all for apples in general, we should say that he was unable to classify. Until a man can classify, he can form no idea of law and order. How then can he learn any sort of discipline? He is like a little child. The baby of to-day first discovers that Bingo bites: then he discovers that Pongo does the same. When he has arrived well into childhood, then the child can learn to classify and he attains to the wonder-



ful generalisation that dogs delight to bark and bite. It is only when he has this power of generalisation that he can begin to form a code of morals.

Until that time arrives, the baby's life must be regulated by the taboo system. The baby must be taught not to go near Bingo because nasty Bingo does not like it; it must be taught not to cry when nurse is in the room, because crying makes nursie angry. It is only later that it can appreciate the law that little boys must be seen and not heard.

Primitive man learned that certain deeds brought evil results. He could not classify them; but he could tell his sons, that they were "not done": they were taboo, "bad form," displeasing to the spirits. Thus the earliest expression of organised Christianity, Taboo, taught man to be aware of things and to notice that certain causes produced certain effects. Gradually the simple taboo of early animism developed into the elaborate totemism of later days. Animism taught men that there was a separate spirit in every natural object. Totemism took that natural object and said that a particular group of men lived under its protection. Some particular natural object thus became the "Totem" of each group, and the indwelling

genius of that object became the presiding spirit of the group. Naturally every member of the group revered any token that served to remind him of his group's presiding genius. Perhaps he wore it about his person just as a schoolboy wears the colours of his school.

In much the same way as a school badge is the symbol of the tradition of the school, an intangible something, with which every schoolboy is acquainted, though he cannot describe it in words, the Totem also was the symbol of abstract idea. Thus Totemism, by teaching men to have a vague apprehension of abstract idea, was paving the way for the next system in which Christianity would display itself.

Experience of warfare had taught men the importance of courage and mutual loyalty. Totemism defined this idea and endowed it with the sanction of religion when it gave each group a spirit to preside over it. Public worship voiced the religious feeling of the group when it called the members together to share the life of the presiding spirit by feasting on the animal in which that spirit dwelt. The sacramental idea is of ancient origin. It is impossible to say when men first began to eat God that they might assimilate His Being with their own. For countless years Christian people, living under

many different religious systems, have been expressing their belief in the joy of human comradeship and the dignity and reality of earthly life by sacramental means.

Experience that they had gained as they lived together, had taught men the importance of proper sexual relationships if the social group was to maintain its strength for the struggle to exist. Totemism defined the idea of the sacredness of fertility, and public worship gave it expression in all the elaborate initiatory ceremonies that youths underwent when they reached the age of puberty. The need for baptism and confirmation was felt in ancient days. For countless years, Christian people, living under many different religious systems, have invoked divine assistance to aid them in the struggle with the flesh.

To become aware of a thing, to become keenly and vividly conscious of it, is to take the first step towards consciousness of self and of the living God. Totemism was used by Christ to make men aware of things. It was used by Him also to teach men the elements of self-discipline and law. When it had taught them these lessons, its work was accomplished. The spirit of Christ left it. It was time that the old system should disappear. Another system was ready to replace it. The Totem developed into the



Tribal God, and “ Every nation made Gods of their own and put them in the houses of the high places,”—“ high places ” which, since man could remember, had been set aside for the nature worship of Totemism.

Taboo was the primitive form of Christianity. If Taboo lingered on after its work was done and after the Christian spirit of life had departed from it, then it would become simply an empty house where the spirit of fear might dwell. It would become a source of infection to society, instead of a source of life. It would no longer provide the sanction for man’s sociable and kindly desire to allow his fellows to profit from his experience. It would provide a false sanction for the cruelty of blind terror. To fear a thing, to dread it, to wish to avoid the pain of it even at the cost of self-annihilation, is to take the first step on the way to nothingness. Fear is the motive of all idolatry. If Taboo lingered on after its work was done and men began to treat it as an end in itself, instead of as a means for the attainment of divine knowledge, it would no longer be men’s servant but their harsh and cruel task-master.

This is what actually happened. The Taboo system—nature worship—lingered on after its work was done, although it disguised itself in

new forms and even masqueraded under the same guise as that adopted by the purer form of worship which succeeded it. One period merges imperceptibly into the next and the atmosphere of the old age lingers on, no longer transmitting the light and warmth of life but enshrouding men in the cold, dank mists of fear and death. Once upon a time, the old legend tells us, the Lord God could be perceived by men as He walked abroad in His garden in the cool of the day. Men took a simple pleasure in the joy of life. But gradually they came to treat as an end in itself what had been meant as a means to lure them on to greater self-development. They came to value a thing for its pleasant taste, for its agreeable look, or for the mundane wisdom that it imparted. They forgot that all these things are but a means to an end. "The tree was good for food, pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise. Men took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid themselves—because they were afraid." History tells of the struggle between courageous love and fear.

History is a drama to which prehistoric times furnish a sort of overture. At first the sounds are vague and faint. Then they become clearer ; the world is taking shape. Definite notes can be distinguished ; things are becoming separate one from another. Then life appears. Next come whole harmonies that we can recognise. We find plants and animals such as we can recognise from our experience of to-day. Still the overture continues. The footlights are still turned down. We can only guess what man is doing as the stage is being set. But the curtain is being slowly raised, the darkness of the stage is becoming transparent, and dimly we catch a glimpse of prehistoric man against a shadowy background. Sometimes we think that we can make out his acts and gestures, but the darkness is not yet dispersed. At long last the stage is bright enough for us to see the slow procession of our history. But no sooner do we begin clearly to see the actors ; no sooner do we begin to try to learn from them how we may play our part, than our time comes and the call-boy tells us not to stand gazing idly at the stage. We, too, must tread upon the boards.

Some men have ever been privileged to stand aloof from the action of the piece and to occupy a place in the stalls whence they may observe



the play and prompt the players. These are the prophets ; for a prophet is not a man who foretells the future by guess work or by miraculous powers of foresight ; a prophet is a man who looks into the past and present and forthtells the meaning of the play. The writer of this book is among the prophets and he prays that he may prophesy the truth.

## CHAPTER XI

### RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION IN THE RIVER PERIOD

A BIRD'S-EYE view of a countryside shows many sharp outlines and clear distinctions, which disappear when a closer knowledge of the country is obtained. Really there are no hard outlines in nature nor abrupt transitions. Really there are no clear epochs in history ; age merges imperceptibly into age. But the haze of distance obscures many details and throws into clear relief the general contours of the field of events, and when we try to get a comprehensive view of history we find that it seems to fall into definite periods. The epochs which distance enables us to discern are determined mainly by geographical considerations. History is the story of man's fight with circumstance, and geography forms a great part of the circumstance with which he contends. As he increases his powers of navigation, the story of his progress towards freedom widens out. He is increasing that same power

of movement by which the living organism first detached itself from the common mass of matter. History, therefore, seems to fall into distinct periods as men learn successively to navigate rivers, and inland seas, and oceans, and, at last, the world-embracing air. But it must always be remembered that these historical divisions are largely only apparent, caused by the distance from which we regard the scene and by the summary nature of our survey. It is only when we remember this that we can safely use them as a scaffolding from the top of which we may gain a comprehensive view of man's development. History is continuous. The causes that operate in any age connect that age with all the ages that have gone before.

Civilisation can only make a beginning in a temperate region, where a genial climate allows a man some leisure after he has satisfied his bodily needs. In the equatorial regions man's energy evaporates, in the arctic zones it is numbed, while in a climate such as prevails in Northern Europe he must needs give his whole attention towards securing a bare subsistence till accumulated riches allow him time for leisure.

Two regions offer excellent geographical opportunities for the development of the earliest civilisation, Egypt and the district of the two



rivers, Tigris and Euphrates. Both regions have river systems which could provide a means of communication for men while they were incapable of mastering even an inland sea. Both regions respond readily to cultivation: both are protected by desert or by mountain from marauding bands of savages. Both—and this is most important—are accessible to the larger area of the Inland Sea. They are, indeed, ideal nurseries for civilisation's infancy. Their protecting doors could remain closed while their charge was still but a weakly child. Later, when it became a strong and lusty youth, the doors could be flung wide open, and access would be given to the Mediterranean Sea and through that, when the time came, to the Atlantic Ocean. Babylon has its direct descendant in London: the civilisations of South America and South Africa are without a lineal heir to-day.

Civilisation began life in a nursery. For thousands of years it needed careful protection from surrounding ignorance and darkness. Just as the centres of primitive civilisation were protected from roving barbarians by the barriers of mountain or desert, so, too, the men who directed civilisation, the Kings and Emperors, were hedged about with all the elaborate precautions of etiquette, and the men who inspired it, the

religious leaders, were sheltered from the familiarity of the vulgar throng by a system of initiation and degree.

It was to be the business of organised religion during the "River Period" to teach society to classify the actions which were unlawful for its members. Taboo had taught it that men must be checked from doing certain deeds, but it had not taught it to classify the deeds which they must not do. The spirits from whom Taboo had derived its sanction had been isolated sprites, dwelling apart from one another in hill, or tree, or river, or star, spirits that had struck terror into the heart of man or warmed his soul with gifts of increase. These sprites had been arbitrary and whimsical. At first men had been able to discover neither rhyme nor reason for their actions. When Taboo developed into Totemism, a rhyme, indeed, was discovered. Society by that time had arrived at the same stage in its development as that reached by a little child when it learns that

"Dogs delight  
To bark and bite."

But society, like the child, had yet to discover the why and wherefore of the barking. This was to be the discovery of the River Period, and it was to be made by means of idol-worship.

Already Totemism had prepared the way for the coming of this new religious form. It is impossible to draw a clear distinction between the totem of the group and the sacred image of the tribe. But it was only during the River Period that Christianity definitely assumed the form of idol-worship. Christ used idol-worship to confer a priceless boon upon humanity, for idol-worship developed men's power of classification ; it enabled them to become conscious of things in general as apart from themselves ; it developed their Self-consciousness and thus brought them further away from the mass of clay whence human bodies are formed and nearer to the Spirit, Who is the bourne of all true humanity. Idol-worship is very different from the idolatry with which it is often confused by unthinking people. The mere fact that a man does reverence to an image is no sign that he is an idolater. Men commit idolatry only when they reverence any accessory of public or private worship—image, creed, bible, tradition, moral law, or what you will—as an end in itself, and fail to see that any form whatsoever is of value only as a means to an end, and that all its value is derived from the spirit that lies behind it.

So far from being identical with idolatry, idol-worship was opposed to it. It was idol-



worship which developed men's power of abstract thought. Indeed, it is almost true to say that idol-worship conferred the power of abstract thought, if not upon the individual, certainly upon society as a whole. The idol-worshipper worships an image, the representation of some object that he has come to regard as holy,—a beast, a man, a tree. But when men begin to worship the image of a tree instead of the tree itself, they abstract the “tree-ishness” from the tree and transfer it to the model that they themselves have made. It will be no such enormously long step forward when they become able to conceive of “tree-ishness” without any model to help them. The great advance is made when the first idol or model is made, for, as soon as men begin to abstract the “tree-ishness” from the tree, or, in other words, the divine essence from the thing that clothes it, they become for the first time fully aware that there is any such thing as “tree-ishness” or divinity. They begin to know the Gods, and they begin to ponder over their quality. Then and not till then can they begin to discover the underlying reason of divine action. Then and not till then can they begin to classify and codify. Until that time arrives man is the creature of his fears, the mere plaything of the cruel and capricious sprites who

rule his destiny. His life is a nightmare of terror. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*, "the unknown is always terrible"; without the power of classification man stands in blank and terrifying ignorance.

The mass of mankind is always timid: only the few are bold enough to free themselves from the trammels of dead fears. It is the little leaven which leaveneth the lump. When Totemism was becoming idol-worship, the little leaven was working in the minds of the few religious leaders of the time. In quiet solitude the wise men were pursuing their investigations and dipping into the secrets of nature. The light of magic was beginning to illuminate the world with fitful gleams. The wise men were beginning to ponder on the reason for things. They were learning to classify.

Idol-worship enabled the religious leaders to grasp the idea of law, for it gave them the power of classification and released them from blind terror. It enabled Moses to formulate his Ten Commandments and Khammurabi to frame his laws. It changed the Taboo of earlier times into the *consuetudo*, the *mos majorum*, the wise custom of the ancients. The magic that happened to accompany idol-worship made it possible for the law-giver to exact obedience from his

tribe. It enabled Moses to produce plagues greater than the plagues produced by the sorcerers of Egypt. It enabled him to arrange for the protection of a pillar of fire by night and of a pillar of cloud by day. It made the axe-head swim and rendered the oil-cruse inexhaustible. Hedged about with his initiations and incantations and charms, the magician could lead the mass of the people on to the clearer knowledge of God that law would give them. "And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses spake to them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face."

When once the people understood that they were subject to law, and that they were not the victims of mere caprice, then they too could begin to stand erect. In early times they had cried in blind and hopeless terror before the capricious sprites who mocked them: but thanks to idol-worship, the totem had become the tribal deity:



men now could march confidently against the enemies of their tribe beneath the banners of the God who was their champion. When the Philistine cursed David by his Gods, David replied, "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin : but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand and I will smite thee and take thine head from off thee ; and I will give the carcasses of the hosts of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth ; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." Each nation thought that its own God was the most powerful. "What God is there in heaven or earth that can do according to the works of our God ?" Such was the burden of their songs. But in return for his championship of the tribe, the tribal deity expected all the allegiance of each member of that tribe. Nothing must be withheld from God not even human life itself. "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac : yea he, that had received the promises, was offering up his only begotten son." Idol worship taught men to sacrifice everything, even human life itself, for their country and for their country's God.

The religious systems of the "river period" defined the ideas which were animating the civilisations of the time and expressed them in public worship. Public worship took the form of sacrifice. Men slaughtered animals and even human beings and offered them up to the Gods in token that they offered themselves, a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice. Men knew that they were not worthy to offer themselves without a cleansing process. Atonement was necessary. But who could cleanse them save only the Gods themselves? Who were men that they should be able to offer anything to the Gods? All things came of the Gods. To the Gods belonged the greatness, and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty. Men were sunk in sin. Only the Gods could make them at one with themselves. Thus it came about that the idea of sacrifice became linked on to the earlier idea of communion: for only by sharing in the life of the Gods, only by eating them and assimilating their nature, only by becoming one with them, could man become pure enough to offer to them any sacrifice. Thus the Gods themselves became identified in men's minds with the victims that were offered to them in sacrifice, and which were at the same time the means whereby the divine life was shared out unto men.

But if the Gods are identified with the victims, then the sacrifice is not only a sacrifice that men offer to the Gods, but also a sacrifice that the Gods offer to men. The sacrificial idea is of ancient origin. It paved the way for Him Who taught that God sacrifices Himself for the world. It is exemplified to-day in the Mass.

The religious idea, that Holy Mass expresses, has come to different nations in slightly different ways, for there were several centres of civilisation during the River Period. We know best how it came to the Jews, because we are most familiar with their writings. But perhaps it showed itself in its purest form in a more distant civilisation than theirs, among the people who worshipped the Sun, the giver of warmth and light and life and fertility, who dies each night to be born again each morning. It is, perhaps, through them and their spiritual heirs, the Mithraists, that it was passed on to the religious system that flourished later during the period of the Inland Seas. The story tells us that wise men from the East brought gifts to the Babe at Bethlehem, Gold and Frankincense and Myrrh. It was, perhaps, the religious life of the East that contributed the most valuable gift to the church which worshipped the Babe. Perhaps it contributed the ceremony which shows that men



can be at unity with themselves and with one another, because they are at unity with God. Mass shows forth the holiness of common things. It proclaims the divinity in which the whole world has its being. Ordinary earthly bread and ordinary earthly wine are the Body and Blood of the Christ. It is in ordinary human lives that the Christ displays the spirit of self-sacrifice. Mass shows forth the majesty of human life. Man shares God's being. He shares God's sacrifice of self. He can help fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ, even as Jesus showed him how. For the Christ dwells in man, even as He dwelt in Jesus. Mass declares that man is more than mortal. It proclaims that he is a phase of God.

Idol-worship had done its work. Men had learnt to form abstract ideas. They no longer needed Urim and Thummim to serve as emblems of divinity. Tribal deities, such as Jehovah, might disappear. They had accomplished the purpose for which the Christ had used them. They had enabled man to conquer his fears and to stand upright upon his feet. They had

“ . . . . raised up the poor out of the dust  
And lifted up the needy from the dunghill,  
To make them sit with princes  
And inherit the throne of Glory.”

Men had learnt to classify causes and effects, and had begun to discover the laws of the Gods. They were passing on to classify the laws, and they were arriving at a conception of Law and of God's unity. As they meditated on the majesty and constancy of their tribal champion, they found that all other deities melted away before him :

“There is none holy as the Lord ;  
For there is none beside thee :  
Neither is there any rock like our God.  
Talk no more so exceeding proudly ;  
Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth :  
For the Lord is a God of knowledge,  
And by him actions are weighed.”

“ Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer, the Lord of Hosts ; I am the first and the last ; and beside me there is no God. . . . They that make a graven image are all of them vanity and their delectable things shall not profit.”

The old sacrificial system had done its work. It had proclaimed that the Gods fought for men, and it had enabled men to some extent to identify themselves with the Gods. It had enabled men to gain some semblance of at-one-ment with the divine. But it was only a parable of a time to come, a mere carnal ordinance imposed until the

time of reformation. . . . Christianity was about to seek a new form in which to clothe itself. The old sacrificial system must yield to a new system, a system that was to proclaim that God identifies Himself with man and that He dies for man in man.

The law had done its work. It had been a schoolmaster to bring men unto the perfect liberty of Christ, where there should be neither Greek nor Jew, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but where all might be one in Christ. The law must lose itself in the perfect liberty of Godly anarchy.

The whole of creation had been leading up to the moment when men should show themselves to be the sons of God. Creation had seemed empty and without purpose, but all through the stages of evolution and the development of man it had in reality been full of a great hope, the hope that spirit would eventually burst through the barriers of matter, and that some day it should be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It was time for idol-worship and tribal deities and the old covenants of restrictive law to die, that the religious feeling of society might clothe itself in a system wider and freer than had yet been known.



The system of Taboo, nature worship, had lingered on, side by side with pure idol-worship. It had artfully adopted the garb of idol-worship itself and it lurked disguised in such systems as the worship of Baal. But it had long been dead. The life had long gone out of it. Men had learnt all that it could teach them. It had become a fit instrument for cruel fear. The worshippers of Jehovah saw that there was something amiss with Baalism, and they attacked it with force; but the force that they employed was blind force; it was blinded by fear. The Jehovahists were so afraid of the Baalism which they attacked that they could not see to aim clearly. Fear blinded their eyes because they themselves were become the creatures of fear. They no longer desired the toilsome effort of spiritual development. They hankered after material comfort. They were not pure in heart. They liked their salutations in the market place, their chief seats at feasts, the respect that men paid to their signs of piety. They themselves were become earthly-minded. They valued earthly treasure rather than heavenly, and where their treasure was their heart was also; therefore, in attacking Baalism they aimed their blow at the earthly form that it was wearing and not at the spirit which inhabited it. The form of Baalism might yield

to their blows, but the spirit remained on to poison the worship of Jehovah itself.

Just as Taboo had disguised itself as idol-worship and perverted idol-worship into idolatry, so, in its turn, idolatry disguised itself as tradition and perverted law into mere formalism. The wisdom of the ancients, the *mos majorum*, became a thong that throttled men with the coils of death. The very men whose ancestors had cut down the sacred groves and destroyed the high places, bowed their own heads in worship of a sacred book of which one jot or tittle must not be disturbed. They used this book as a means for their own exaltation. They sought to twist it to their will, making the word of God of none effect through their tradition. The worship of Jehovah was become a most evil and subtle form of idolatry. Its work was done. It had taught men law, and now it was time for law to be superseded.

## CHAPTER XII

### RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN PERIOD

THE system of Taboo had taught Society to be aware of things and to note that certain causes produce certain effects. The idol-worship and magic of the river period had enabled it to classify causes and arrive at the idea of law. But the underlying motive of history is the motive of self-sacrifice, a willing death to secure an intenser life. Man must not rest content with his institutions. He must always be willing to risk himself and them. Law must kill itself and become anarchy. The old covenant must pass away.

The geographical conditions of the Mediterranean Period were different from any that had gone before. Civilisation was no longer a timid thing flourishing in isolated centres and protected by desert and mountain from surrounding barbarism. Centre could now be linked to centre. Men no longer feared to navigate the Inland Sea.



For long it was uncertain which nation living on its coasts would gain the leadership. The mountain ridges and indented coasts of Greece had served as bulwarks for intensive culture, but the confined and cramped civilisation of the Greeks had made their character unfit for world rulership. There were only two possible candidates for the hegemony of the Mediterranean, Rome and Carthage. Geographical conditions decided in favour of Rome. Rome's position lay nearer to the centre of the sea. She was situated on a river, near enough to the sea for commerce, too far distant from it to fear the attack of pirates. She was protected from bandits by the lie of the surrounding country. She was connected with the fruitful soil of Europe, and Europe was populated by a hardy, energetic people. The hinterland of Carthage was the Sahara. In spite of herself Rome drifted into Empire, retaining to the last some traces of Government by borough council.

The principate, government by the Caesar, was evolved as a sort of makeshift to provide a centralised government. Men had need of a new form of religion to give its sanction to their new ideal of unity. The Caesars tried to meet the need by elevating patriotism to the dignity of a religion. Others sought satisfaction of their

need in Greek philosophy or eastern mystery. It was at this time that Jesus was born. "In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son"—a being in Whom the Christ was to be perfected.

All the material conditions of the time were favourable for the birth of a man who came to give an universal message. The Romans were establishing order throughout the Western world. The Greek language was ready as a beautiful and far-travelling vehicle for thought. The great Roman roads were awaiting the feet of the messengers, and the principal messenger had been bred up to a knowledge of all the factors that made the new system possible. St. Paul was a Roman citizen, a citizen of Tarsus, no mean city. He had sat at the feet of Gamaliel and absorbed the wisdom of Hebrew law. He had some knowledge of Greek poetry and thought.

No country could have been better suited for the birth of Jesus than Palestine. A tiny country it was, no larger than Wales or Portugal, a little bit of a great Empire. Yet that tiny country was a replica in miniature of the world at large. There Greek and Roman and Oriental had a common meeting ground. There Roman governor and native rajah, Hebrew rabbi and Greek philosopher, native farmer and fisherman and the merchant from the East lived side by side.

But the pure religion of Jesus Himself was not to be the religion of the Mediterranean Period. Pure Christianity did not triumph because there was not among men any such thing as pure Christianity. From the very first the disciples of Jesus were not pure in heart, and only the pure in heart see God. The disciples of Jesus wished to follow their Master, but they wished also to secure for themselves comfortable positions of dignity and influence. Some had desired an earthly kingdom: some had desired a heavenly kingdom: all had desired some sort of a kingdom with themselves as judges of the tribes. They soon forgot the lesson that Jesus sought to teach them, when He washed their feet, or when He pointed to the children as examples, or bade them call no man father or lord. They all desired to be superior people of some sort, whether as monks and spiritual directors or as bishops and political wire-pullers. Their motives were mixed. They wished to serve God and Mammon. The poison of death circulated in the veins of the church from the very first: for a man, who makes comfort or applause or high position his aim, cannot but be to some extent the slave of fear. He is afraid of discomfort and unpopularity. He is "nervous." He aims at a "position" of dignified



security. And a position is stationary. It is fixed. God is a God of growth. Caesar worship, Mithra worship, Jesus worship and worship of knowledge, each made its contribution to the Catholic Church ; and in each of these four systems pure Christianity and idolatry had always been mingled.

From Caesarism came the wisdom that prompted the church to admit the old nature-gods and tribal deities into the pantheon of Christian Saints. There was no great harm in that. The form that a religion takes is a matter of comparative indifference. What is important is the spirit that inspires it. The priests of Baal had been provoked to cruelty by their fears. Fear had been their master and fear had been their weapon. The mantle of the priests of Baalism gradually settled on the shoulders of the priests of Catholicism. They inherited not only the form of idol-worship but also the fearful spirit which the old nature worship had left behind it after its death.

We know little of the contribution made by Mithraism to the Catholic Church. It is only recently that we have begun to discover how widespread was the cult. Catholicism had opposed it with fear in its heart and with weapons in its hands. So bitter was the struggle that

few traces remain of the vanquished. But we do know that many of the ceremonies of Catholicism are similar to those of Mithraism. Baptism, Eucharist, nay, even such details as the shape of the modern bishops' head-dress, were to be found in the Mithraistic Church.

Communion with God, the holy dance and song, the offering up of the material things of earthly life to God, and the rites of initiation, can be traced right back through the whole history of religious worship. They have existed probably in nearly every form of Christianity that has lightened the path that leads mankind to God. In such primitive forms as still survive, we find them in existence. "Mass is offered up" not only by "Christian" priests in Rome and London but also by "Heathen" priests in Africa. An initiation of some sort is performed to-day not only in the baptisteries of St. Peter's and St. Paul's but also in the wilderness of the Australian bush. We may be glad of this. It merely goes to show the world-old antiquity of our religion and of our religious forms. We may be grateful to the Mithraistic Church if it is from her that we have received them. But the Catholics combated Mithraism with the blind force that fear invokes. Blind force accomplishes nothing. With the beauty and



seemliness of forms consecrated by long usage, there came also the poison of fear that was later to fix Catholicism in the rigidity of death. At last, when the work of Catholicism was accomplished, death would declare itself in mechanical theories about the divine presence in the Eucharist and about the nature of the regeneration given in Holy Baptism. In blind fear men would purchase masses for their soul's health and buy themselves off the pains of purgatory. The consecrated Host would become a talisman : the baptismal formula would become a charm.

The early Catholics were as afraid of Greek philosophy as they were afraid of Mithra, and they attacked it. Laughter should be the only weapon of offence for men who know that God is all in all, the only Reality, and that all else is empty sham and illusion. But the poison of fear made the Catholics try to defeat philosophy with philosophical weapons. The church became entangled in the meshes of sophistry and enamoured of her own philosophy. So enamoured did she become that she set it on a pedestal and bade men worship it, not as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. The human effort to define God was given the place that only can be filled by God's boundless infinity. Philo-



sophy is good, as everything else is good, when it is used as a means to an end. The philosophy which the catholic church inherited from the Greeks, debased though it may have become in its transference into the wider system, enabled many men to attain to a clearer understanding of God's majesty than had been possible without it. But as soon as men began to treat it as an end in itself and to worship it as God, then it verily became their God and enslaved them in its toils. Men bowed down and worshipped the image of their own foolish cleverness. The very philosophy, which had paved the way for Jesus and made it possible for Him to liberate men from the trammels of the old law, became a new law and one heavier to be borne than the first. The foolishness of fear had caught Catholicism tight within its icy hug. Catholicism became cold and rigid and lifeless as a corpse.

It is impossible for any presentation of religion which claims to satisfy the needs of all humanity to avoid formality, while it is bound about with the fetters of dogma. In the world there are all sorts and conditions of men. If all their varied aspirations after God and all their different experiences of His goodness are to be reduced to common formularies authoritatively expressed in definite terms, then men must frankly be

allowed to give these formularies no more than the homage of their lips. If more than this is exacted of them, it will be discovered by bitter experience that the letter killeth; the spirit giveth life. A word is but the symbol of an idea. It is the idea that is alive: the word is lifeless—a garment in which a living idea may clothe itself. No two men can possibly interpret any one word in quite the same way, for each man forms his own idea of the word's meaning from his previous experience of what men have seemed to him to mean when they have used it. Therefore lip service is the only possible form of service that a man can render to a formulary: he must give it his own interpretation. To try to induce him to do more than this is to tempt him to commit idolatry, and idolatry of the most dangerous sort. Language is one of God's most precious gifts to men, but, just because it is most valuable, it is most dangerous when it is abused. It may give a man the freedom of the world of thought, if he treat it as a servant. If he allow it to become his master, then it will run away with him and land him in the arid desert of lifeless formalism.

While the Christ was manifesting Himself in the human form of Jesus, there had been no great accuracy of speech among those who followed



Him. They were called "Way-followers": they were trying to follow the Way that leads to the living God. It was at a later date at Antioch that they were first called Christians. It was at a later date still that they began to codify their God. At first they were not tied down to the dead forms of language. Death had no dominion over them. They had not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear: but they had received the spirit of adoption whereby they cried Abba, Father. But as the spirit of fear gripped hold of them they ceased to utter their careless shouts of praise. Instead they chanted in measured tones, "This is the Catholic faith, which except a man hold faithfully he cannot be saved." The spirit of Christ had departed from Catholicism. The church was no longer inspired by the ideals of Jesus. Men had lost their earlier joy of heaven and were preoccupied with fears of hell. They no longer wished to utter a chorus of praise to the Creator: instead they desired to have a safe prescription for avoiding the pains of hell. Such a prescription, like any other prescription, must be accurately and exactly composed. God's nature was pigeon-holed and docketed, the inter-state boundaries of the next world were clearly mapped out with nice precision: the person and pre-



rogatives of Jesus the Christ were exactly defined. It was even attempted to lay down how many angels could be accommodated on the point of a needle. The old "symbol" of divine truth of early days developed into the categorical "credo," a man-made idol howling for the sacrifice of human souls and bodies. The first results of the new form of idolatry were to be seen in the persecutions of early heretics and in the great schism which divided the church. Churchmen could not settle the nice point whether the Holy Ghost "proceeded from the Father and the Son" or "from the Father through the Son."

The creeds were drawn up by the clergy, but the laity was responsible for their erection to the position of idols. The spirit of fear had corroded the layman's heart. He was afraid to trust himself to God. He employed professional men to devise methods of escaping hell. The professionals formulated their methods in the creeds, and the fears of men made them glad to fall down and worship these idols which had been erected for their use. Idolatry of some sort has always been encouraged by every professional priesthood. Idolatry aims at the alleviation of men's fears instead of the satisfaction of their love of adventure. It is an attempt at a short

cut to happiness and it is as natural for a professional priest to encourage it as it is natural for a professional business man to adopt any labour-saving device. Labour-saving devices produce cheap articles, but cheap articles seldom last as long as home-made goods.

Cheap religion is like cheap clothing. It is as natural for a man to buy the one as the other. Neither cheap religion nor cheap clothing are of value in times of stress. Amid the stormy winds that marked the beginning of the Oceanic Period, Catholicism perished. God allowed it to die because its work was done. The church no longer even aimed at catholicity. She was become a close corporation. The word "churchman" was now restricted in its use to paid ecclesiastics. The word "religious" was confined to monks and nuns, people who made a profession of their piety. The old catholic church had done her work and she ceased to exist. Society was become fully conscious of itself. It was now necessary that it should take pains and win its way to the perfection that only painful practice gives. It is only by taking infinite pains that the artist attains to the perfection in which he can forget himself, his material and the technique of his craft. It is only after infinite pains that Society can afford



to forget the law that had enabled it to find itself, and so win its way to the perfect freedom of self-abandonment in God.

Catholicism had taken up all men's aspirations and hopes and bound them into one coherent whole. It had made Society conscious of itself. It had not been manufactured, but it had grown up from the conditions of its time. It had given natural expression to the religious aspiration of Society. Gothic architecture and mediaeval artistry, the glories of chivalry, the spontaneous joy of country song and dance all testify to the reality and vitality of its work. Just as the religious system of the River Period had provided both the motive of the civilisation of that period and the means for its fulfilment, just as magic and idol-worship had made possible the conception of law and also enabled the lawgiver to exact obedience to his code, so, too, Catholicism was at once the jewel that gave value to the Mediterranean civilisation and its weapon of defence. It gave a new value and dignity to human life by its doctrine of the Incarnation. It provided a focus for the unity of Christendom. All roads led to Rome, and there the traveller found Pope and Caesar sitting side by side ; but it was the old man chanting litanies who repelled the barbarians



whom Caesar's armies could not force to yield. It was the Pope who saved Europe from the Moslem terror. Catholicism was at once the treasure and the sword of mediaeval times. The crusades were holy wars.

As had been the case with all the religious systems that preceded it, Catholicism consisted partly of Christianity, the religion of love, and partly of idolatry, the religion of fear. When it had done its work and society had become fully conscious of itself, there was no longer any reason for its existence. The poison of fear which had always been in its veins paralysed it and made it numb. As it drew nearer and nearer to the completion of its task, it became less and less of a living organism inspired with the spirit of God and more and more of a lifeless organisation directed by earthly-minded men. "Put not your trust in princes nor in any child of man" had sung the Hebrew poet. A religious system that had come to trust in worldly wisdom, or in the empty shell of mere formality, or in the cleverness of human philosophy, was bound to die. Its eyesight would be impaired by its impurity. The force that it employed would be blind force, the force that is occasioned by fear. The use of force is not wrong in itself. Indeed it is only through force, moral, intellectual,

or physical, that man has been able to emerge from inanimate matter. But the use of force is foolish when it is actuated by fear. When a man is too afraid of his adversary to laugh at him and treat him as a joke, then it is mere foolishness for him to attempt to use force. Laughter is the ensign of victory, for laughter is the outward and audible sign of a happy inward confidence in God. Catholicism began the contest well with St. Stephen's mocking carelessness of death. In the first decades there were many to copy his example, but gradually the poison of fear deprived men of their power of laughter. The Bridegroom no longer dwelt with them to keep them awake with jest and irony. Men slept, and while men slept an enemy sowed tares in the field. When St. Stephen's smile had been succeeded by the Inquisitor's scowls, then, indeed, it was time for Catholicism to die.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DISORGANISATION OF RELIGION

CATHOLICISM collapsed as soon as men became able to navigate the oceans. New worlds, not only of territory but of thought, were being opened up. The seizure of Constantinople by the Turks caused the dispersal throughout Europe of volumes of Greek philosophy, which until then had been hidden in Eastern libraries. The discovery of the art of printing put learning within the reach of many to whom it had been hitherto inaccessible. Spaciousness became the background of men's lives, and freedom became the object of their endeavour, freedom in religion and politics, and in their individual lives. They refused any longer to be cramped by the fetters of Imperial or Catholic Rome. Sovereign nationalities gradually displaced the Holy Roman Empire. Feudalism slowly gave way to popular government and the modern industrial system.

In some respects the history of the Oceanic Period was like that of the Mediterranean Period.



Britain, like Rome, rules the waves, thanks to geographical considerations and to little else. Spain might have done so, Holland might have done so, had it not been for London's geographical position as the connecting link between the old world and the new, and for the mineral wealth which enabled Britain to take full advantage of her position. Britain, like Rome, glided into Empire, adapting her insular administration to wider needs as she drifted on her way. But there is one great difference between the civilisation of the Oceanic Period and that of the Mediterranean Period. The Oceanic Period, unlike its predecessor, had no coherent religious system to give its sanction to Society.

The old religious system was utterly destroyed. Men saw that it was incompatible with their desire for freedom, and they attacked it, but like the Jews of old, they had their eyes blinded by impurity. Their motives were mixed. Some opposed Catholicism for political reasons; a change of faith might convert a ducal coronet into a royal crown. Some opposed it because they saw in its revenues a means to increase their own grandeur. Many of the broad acres and magnificent houses that minister to the splendour of our great English families to-day were filched from the church in the time of

Henry VIII. Men's affections were set on things that are upon the earth and not upon the things that are above. They attached more importance to earthly circumstance than to spiritual worth. Even those who professed to be acting from religious motives were carnal-minded men. They concentrated their gaze on the outward forms and ceremonies of the ancient church, and they imagined that in them they had discovered the poison which they sought to eliminate. The lust for destruction possessed them. They derived no inspiration from the spirit of creative love. They feared the devil. They had never fallen in love with God. Their work therefore had nothing constructive about it. It was purely negative. They destroyed much that was of value. They erected nothing new.

Here and there a More, a Colet, or an Erasmus might be found dreaming dreams of a heaven realised upon God's earth. Such men were exceptional. Ordinarily Protestantism was purely negative. Its leaders were not actuated by love of the life-giving spirit. They were actuated solely by hatred of matter. They protested that true religion should be a purely spiritual affair, and they tried to abolish rites and ceremonies of every sort. But the whole basis on which a religious system rests is the

truth that religion is not purely spiritual. "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The fatherless and widows appreciate beef tea and jelly, and pure religion prompts us to fill our baskets before we visit them. It prompts us also to knock at the door before we enter their houses and to use the customary conventions of politeness.

Purely spiritual religion is an impossible nightmare. Everything that we think or say or do is said or thought or done by material means. All energy operates through matter in this material world. The man who says that it is right to pray for "spiritual" blessings, but wrong to pray for material benefits, forgets that all energy is the same. He forgets that God is Almighty—the source of all might. The power of Niagara, the power in a man's brain, the power in his arms and the power in his morals all come from God. Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread. It is as right to pray for a good potato crop as it is to pray for piety. It is as logical to ask divine help when we dam a river or build a bridge as it is to use the divine energy that resides in our muscles in order to wield our picks and shovels in the work. If we can exercise



causation and interfere with the current's course, surely God can do so also : all causation is of Him : and we ourselves can only exercise causation because the self in us is divine. Religion is not purely spiritual. It is the link that binds spirit and matter together in holy wedlock. It is the sacrament that hallows earthly life. " No man ever hated his own flesh ; but loveth it and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the Church." The church is the bride of Christ. Matter mates with spirit. What God hath joined together, the puritan dared to put asunder. He tried to divorce spirit from matter. What God is ever cleansing by His abiding presence, the puritan dared to label as common and unclean. He sought to avoid all material expression of his religion, because he hated matter as something evil. His hatred and fear of matter and formality induced him to commit blasphemy. Form is good. It is the means employed by God for the manifestation of Himself in creation. It is evil only when it is regarded apart from Him. Apart from Him it is nothing ; it is hell. When the puritans hated and feared everything material and formal, they were ignoring the purpose of creation. They were treating the world not as God's footstool, but as the devil's throne. To the pure all things are pure : to the impure

nothing is pure. The puritans found the devil everywhere and they turned God's earth into hell. They despised matter and they were afraid of it, because they ignored its purpose. Because they were afraid of it, it mastered them. Protestantism was the prelude to materialism.

Materialism overpowered the civilisation, which was the outcome of puritan effort, because the puritans succeeded in alienating the sympathies of ordinary, decent men. Their fears of hell led them to divert public worship from its proper purpose. The proper function of public worship is to voice the religious aspiration of society. If men try to make it do more than this they are perverting it from its proper use. They are committing idolatry. They are violating God's economy. This is precisely what their fears induced the puritans to attempt. The little sects into which Catholicism was shattered occupied themselves not so much with giving vent to the religious feelings of society as with drawing up nice charts and maps by which their members might hope to escape shipwreck in this world or the next. The churches and chapels ceased to be places of public worship and became conventicles, places where queer little groups of people met together, to talk over methods of escaping hell. The pulpit displaced the altar.

The church was turned into a lecture room. But the ordinary man does not like lectures ; he began to stay away from church. The sectarians threatened with damnation all those who would not submit themselves to their discipline and repeat their shibboleths. The only result of their exclusiveness was to make the idea of a religious system not only contemptible but abhorrent to the ordinary member of society. The ordinary man was driven from the churches, even as Jesus was driven from the Temple long ago by the exclusiveness of the Jews. When Jesus left the Temple, the Christ left the Temple, for Christ dwelt in Jesus. When ordinary men are alienated from a religious system, it is a sign that Christ is alienated from that system, for Christ dwells in the hearts of ordinary, common men, such as those who were glad to hear the words of Jesus. For four hundred years Christ has been absent from the sects and churches. For four hundred years there has been no religious system which might voice the religious feeling of ordinary men. Society has been unable to give vent to its religious aspiration. It has ended by having no religious aspiration. It has become purely materialistic. The spirit bloweth where It listeth. For four hundred years It has not chosen to inspire society with the breath of life.



During the Oceanic Period society as a whole has been concerned solely with the mechanical paraphernalia of existence. It has forgotten that the life is more than the meat and that the body is more than raiment. It has tried to rear the fabric of its civilisation upon the shifting sands of expediency and earthly circumstance instead of upon the firm foundation of the Rock of Ages. The result has been disastrous. A religious system is as essential to a civilisation that is to accomplish anything as thought is essential to a man of action. Who is there that intends to build a tower who does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundations, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build a tower and was not able to finish." The civilisation of the Oceanic Period has been a mockery. It has been a mockery because it has had behind it no real religious system to give it unity of purpose. The rain has descended and the winds have blown and smitten upon the tower which society tried to build for itself. Great has been its fall. Tyranny by majorities has crowned men's effort to achieve freedom in politics. Wage slavery has crowned their effort to achieve freedom in

industry. Chaos has crowned their effort to achieve freedom in the sphere of religion. The workhouse has succeeded to the monastery as a haven of refuge for the many wrecks of society. The bloodiest war in history has been the outcome of an era that has taken no official cognisance of God.

There is a curious parallel to the Oceanic Period of which we may read in the pages of the Old Testament. At Babel men were more concerned with the means than the end. They, too, worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. They were as proud of their parody of civilisation as the men of recent days have been of theirs. "Go to," they said. "Let us build a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole world." And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language ; and this is what they begin to do ; and now, nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do. Go to, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." In Oceanic times, also, men have been speaking in different languages. There has been no joy in

fellowship. Each man has been speaking in a tongue peculiar to himself. Men have not walked together as friends because they have had nothing to remind them that the house where they are walking is God's House. Science, art, religion, commerce and industry have been going separate ways, because they have had no consciousness of the common purpose that should unite them.

The only purpose that can unite society must be a religious purpose, and society failed to re-organise itself on a religious basis when the old catholic system came to an end, because its leaders were more concerned to destroy the ancient forms of religion bequeathed to them by their fathers than they were to revitalise society with the life of Christ. It was easy enough to destroy the ancient system. It was brittle and without living force. The spirit of Christ had left it, because in it that spirit had become unable to do any mighty work. The spirit of Christ can do no mighty work when men are unbelieving, and the creeds which the ancient church had formulated had become signs of her real unbelief. They had been made into tests for church membership. Real belief does not mean believing things about God. It means trusting to God. The creeds had become tests for church member-



ship when the church no longer dared to trust her members to the free uncovenanted mercies of God, and when she no longer dared to trust God to the free, untrammelled thought of her members. She had ceased to trust Him in Himself, as He is in the perfection of Heaven. She had ceased to trust Him in creation as He manifests Himself on earth in man. She had tried to tie Him down to formularies. She had tried to confine the Divine Majesty within the limits of human thought. But God cannot be confined in this way. He had left the church. At the beginning of the Oceanic Period the ancient system was devoid of vitality. It was brittle. Only the most tender care could have infused it again with the spirit of life.

So far from showing tender care for the hallowed forms of antiquity, the leaders of society attacked them with all their force. The ancient system of religion was smashed into a thousand fragments and the poison of fear, which had permeated that system and given it the rigidity of death, was spilt out over the world at large. Awful theories of predestination and blasphemous doctrines of substitution held men in their grip. The beautiful painted images were torn down from the churches, but the soul-cramping creeds remained, and their number was

increased. Articles, more nicely blasphemous than any ancient formula, sought to confine the majesty of God to the limits of human thought. The Bible was treated as a miraculous oracle. Fear was the motive and the weapon of sectarianism. Men even offered human sacrifice in Smithfield, and, when human sacrifice came to be considered crude, they tried the effect of moral torture. The time came when the Test Acts were repealed and later the Papists were emancipated, but even to-day moral force is used by so-called Christians. Even to-day we send out missionaries to foreign parts and priests in England try to compel their people to come in, not so much because they wish them to enjoy a happy feast, as because they seek to save them from a dreadful fate. Salvation is still too often taken to mean salvation from the pains of hell. It has lost its ancient meaning of wholeness, or holiness of life. The wrath of God has been the burden of men's cries, and their terror of God has induced them to commit idolatry. In ancient days they tried to persuade the Virgin Mary to beg them off God's wrath. The puritans smashed down the images of our Lady from their churches but the spirit of fear still lingered in their hearts. They no longer sought our Lady's aid to shield them from the consequences of

their evil doing. Instead, they sought a shelter from the Father's wrath in the arms of Jesus. The stoutest Protestants who hate the Scarlet Woman, as they hate the devil, are often idolaters disguised. They compass sea and land to make one proselyte ; and when he is become so, they make him twofold more a son of hell than themselves. There is nobody, perhaps, who is so much the son of hollow nothingness as the newly captured proselyte to any creed, who has been led to change his form of faith by motives of timidity. Nobody burns so many candles to our Lady as the pervert to Rome. Nobody utters such loud and insistent cries to Jesus to save his soul from the angry Father's wrath as the pervert to a non-papal church. Papist and anti-papist are equally sectarian. Each one protests that the clique, of which he is a member, is the only body which can guarantee immunity from the pains of hell. Each one asserts that his little clique is the only true representative of that old established firm, the church limited, which is rooted and grounded in human fearfulness. Both have travelled very far from Him who said that it mattered not whether the Father were sought in Samaria or Jerusalem, for everywhere could He be found by those who sought Him in spirit and in truth.



The sects of to-day were born of the sordidness of politicians and adventurers who coveted the riches of the church. They were born of the sordidness of the puritans who took material things so seriously that they were afraid of them. They were born of the sordidness of ecclesiastics who hankered after temporal power and worldly influence. They are of the earth earthy. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the spirit is spirit. We must not marvel if Christ hid Himself in the hearts of ordinary men that true religion might be born again into another form. The pains of birth are grievous. Grievous have been the pains of the Oceanic Period.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RELIGIOUS CHAOS OF THE OCEANIC PERIOD

THE sects with which we are familiar to-day, Anglican, Presbyterian, Primitive Methodist, Roman Catholic and the like, are merely the shapeless broken fragments into which the ancient system was shattered. They are devoid of form, purpose, or life. What trace of form they have is merely a relic from the past. In our own Church of England, for instance, the Archbishop presides over a "province"; but a province was a part of Imperial Rome and the word has no meaning apart from an Imperial Church. The Vicar is the agent or "vicarius" of an abbot who no longer exists. The curate has everything except a "cura." Even the layman is not sure of his position. He does not know whether he is a member of the church by virtue of his baptism, or of his confirmation, or merely of his British birth. Nor can the clergy solve his doubts. They try to do so but the solution offered varies in every parish.

The Church of England is amorphous and she is without a settled policy. She insists that the historic episcopate is at least of the utmost importance and she tells her clergy to obey the godly admonitions of her bishops ; but there is nobody to say when a bishop's admonitions are godly. She insists that all that is necessary to salvation can be found within the pages of the scriptures, and she tells her clergy to teach only what can be proved by the Bible ; but in these days of higher criticism there is nobody to say what is proved by the Bible. The Church of England does not know where she stands nor what she is. She says that she is part of the Catholic Church and that the Catholic Church is the whole company of faithful men dispersed throughout the whole world ; but there is nobody to say who are faithful men. It is true that all the sects assert that the "church invisible" includes all godly men whatever may be their religious persuasion. But such an assertion is only the statement of a truism. Men wish to know the limits of the visible church, and the Church of England refuses to answer their question. She says that she dare not define her position for fear of endangering her chance of serving as a common platform on which the warring sects may unite. The warring sects



will never unite on a platform of which the foundations are insecure. Unity of purpose and definition of aim must come before union of government.

Neo-catholicism has retained more resemblance to the old system than any other form of modern sectarianism. It appears to offer firm foundations for the erection of a man's character. Not only does it profess to offer firm ground for the foundation but most certainly its scaffolding of casuistry and discipline is firmly knit together into one coherent whole. For these reasons it gains many converts. But Neo-catholicism is only a sham and a delusion. It is not catholic, nor has it any chance of becoming catholic while it seeks to confine men within the iron bars of credal tests. It is a man-made contrivance, a country with artificial boundaries, where there are no natural citizens by right of birth, but where all the citizens have bought their citizenship at a great price by subscribing to certain formulae and beliefs and by selling their right to think for themselves. They have sold their birthright for a mess of potage.

Except in such countries as Malta, where the people's outlook is still that of a bygone age, there is to-day no religious system in which the ordinary healthy man feels at home or which

exercises any effect in public life. It is true that ordinary, healthy people make use of the ordinances of the churches, but they are seldom to be found as church-workers: the ecclesiastical layman is usually regarded as a "crank" by his fellows. Bishops and free church leaders hold conferences about social problems, but what serious man pays the slightest attention to their talk except to lament the utter uselessness of official religion as a guide in the conduct of affairs? What life there is in sectarianism is due to the initiative of individual men. The hard-working parson in the slum, the zealous country clergyman going his rounds, the learned theological student of Oxford or Cambridge are, indeed, fired by the spirit and magnificent is their work. But the light that shines from their faces is the reflected glamour of an earlier age, or it comes direct from the Christ Who dwells within them. The sects themselves have no inherent life of their own. The clergy and ministers do their work in spite of the churches. It is in spite of the churches and not on account of them that a man can find his way to God. Public worship has been prostituted to improper purposes and to-day men come to church because they like the padre, or because the music or the sermon appeals to them, or because they are amateurs

of the antique and enjoy the mediaeval smell of incense or the primitive coldness of baptism by total immersion. Very few men attend divine worship because they realise that such attendance is a duty imposed upon them by their citizenship. The ideal of public worship has been lost and men only come to church while God is willing to do His duty in that state of life to which it has pleased them to call Him. Modern religion is individualistic and it is chaotic. The series of events which accompanied the break up of Catholicism and which it has been customary to group together as the Re-formation, could better have been labelled as the Deformation.

But for many years tradition and convention kept men of the Oceanic Period from perceiving that their society was without a living religious system. In the palmy days of the Hanoverian kings, such clergymen as resided in their parishes and troubled to conduct divine worship could still appeal to the popular fear of hell. Gradually men outgrew their panic. They came to realise that if there is a God at all, He is the Maker of the world and all that is therein. No artist ever destroys a good thing that he has made. There is no waste in nature. Whatever is good will endure for all eternity. Whatever is evil is without reality of being ; it is everlasting nothingness,



although in this illusory world it may have the semblance of existence. As men came to understand this, the Georgian galleries of the churches began to grow empty. For a time the squire's wife might persuade her villagers to come to church, much as she might induce them to curtsy to her in the street or to take up Morris dancing or any other custom of lang syne. But *noblesse oblige*. More and more frequently the manorial pew could be seen without a tenant. The squire's wife was no longer playing the game. The villagers refused to play at it without her. The district visitor reported to her vicar that the people declared that they "were all going to the same good place," and meanwhile they saw no reason why they should go to church.

The people had lost their fear of hell. The parson found himself obliged to trade upon their fears of earth. He painted lurid pictures of the pains of venereal disease and delirium tremens and he invited men to take up the profession of religion as a safeguard against such dire results. He tried to make religion serve a useful purpose ; he tried to use it as a means to an end, and the end that he had in view was absence of discomfort. In his effort he turned virtue into vice, and vice almost came to be a virtue. The publican and sinner, the hard swearing trooper,

the woman from Piccadilly Circus, came crowding into the Kingdom. The timid little sectarian remained outside. Our Lord had said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." The sectarian minister translated this into "Blessed are they that try to see God for they shall be pure in body." The sectarian minister did not so much desire to see God as to avoid discomfort in this world or the next. He had lost the vision of heaven that had been enjoyed by the first followers of Jesus. Our Lord's disciples had depicted heaven as a place where angels and men join in a glad chorus of praise to God. The leaders of the Oceanic Period disliked this vision. Such a heaven seemed to them to be uncomfortable and useless, a place where "men sit on damp clouds twanging harps,"—truly a very useless thing to do. The sectarian minister was only trying to adapt his teaching to the prejudices of his contemporaries when he sought to make religion serve a useful purpose. But all the visions of heaven that ever come to men on earth are like the visions that came to men in ancient times. All who have ever had an insight into heavenly bliss describe a region of pure delight, untrammelled by the restrictions of necessity. The artist, when he attains to perfection and loses himself in his art, does not

enquire whether his picture will serve a useful purpose. He does not ask whether it will teach a useful lesson or whether it will have good selling value. He paints for the sheer joy of painting. In heaven there is no need for committees or for Dorcas meetings or temperance socials. Heaven is a place where Mary will feel more at home than Martha. There is neither marrying nor giving in marriage in Heaven. It is without the fussy paraphernalia of our little lives. It is a place of singing and dancing and pure artistry.

The attempt to make religion serve a useful purpose, the worship of mere utility, is a sign of religion's sleep. The sects of recent years have been without form, without a settled policy and without vision. They have been lifeless. True religion has been asleep in the hearts of individual men as she slumbered long ago in prehistoric times. In those days men were confronted with vast tracts of unexplored science and territory. Slowly and painfully they began to gain the mastery over their surroundings. They learned the use of fire and water and varied substances. But for many years they were so busy acquiring fresh knowledge, that they had no leisure time in which they might digest the knowledge that they had won. They lived from hand to mouth.



All their energy was absorbed in the difficult routine of existence. Men were still the slaves of circumstance. Their religious system merely furnished them with a bare list of actions that were injurious to them. It gave no real coherence to their lives. The man of the Oceanic Period was as much the slave of things and as little master of himself as was the man of pre-historic days. It is a truism to say that the working classes for many years have had no time for thought. Huddled together in factories and tenement houses or overcrowded cottages, with a wage which has allowed little opportunity of leisure and an education that has provided no guidance for the enjoyment of what leisure they have possessed, they have been as much the slaves of their environment as were their remotest ancestors.

Perhaps it is not so generally recognised that for many years the world has been inhabited almost entirely by poor, hard-working men. Everybody has been so immersed in the pursuit of greater wealth, that holidays have come to be considered positively unholy. Whatever wealth a man has possessed he has not considered that he had sufficient. He has given all his time to gaining more. He has allowed himself no leisure in which he might enjoy himself: he

has sought all his pleasure in the enjoyment of mere things. That typical product of the Oceanic Period, the millionaire, babbles of marble baths and princely palaces and lordly yachts. He sometimes boasts that he is a self-made man. Poor man ! He has been so absorbed in heaping up riches that he has lost his soul to gain the world. He has no self. He is a thing. Jesus told the rich young man to rid himself of his cumbersome possessions because He wished him to be really rich, the owner of himself.

Society of recent years, like the rich young man, has been oppressed by the multitude of its possessions. Fresh discoveries and new inventions have occurred every day and there has been no common purpose to unite them. Men have been without a religious system to serve as their common thinking apparatus. They have given all their attention to method. They have avoided all consideration of aim and purpose. Society has become aware of gas and steam and electricity, and, in its consciousness of its new powers, it has been as unpleasant as any callow youth when first he becomes aware of the fresh powers of adolescence. A lad in his teens is the creature of every passing whim and impulse. He is as interested in the works of a watch as he is in a dirty tale. He is shy and

awkward. He has not yet co-ordinated his powers or mastered his limbs. He is self-conscious and timid, and, in order to hide his timidity, he poses as a man of the world. He professes that he can manage his own affairs without any assistance from his father or anyone else. For four hundred years society has been as shy and awkward and self-conscious as any youth. Its attention has been given to machinery and sex. Its powers have been without co-ordination. It has been without a coherent religious system to point its purpose and to give it unity, freedom, and the opportunity of real activity. It has been proclaiming that it is of this world only and that it has no concern with heaven.

A wise parent leaves a growing lad much to himself, or rather, he allows the lad to think that he has been left to himself. The lad must take his tumbles and learn from the bruises that he receives. He must endure much pain before he can learn to manage his limbs and attain to the free grace of manhood. He must endure the agony of conscious isolation, both mental and spiritual, and he must endure the pain of physical discomfort. God has treated society as a wise parent treats his son. It has been the wisdom of God that the world through its wisdom knew not God. He has deliberately allowed it to



organise itself apart from Him. He has hid His face from men and they were devoured and many evils and troubles came upon them, that they might come to say, "Are not these evils and troubles come upon us, because God is not among us ? "

The discord of the Oceanic Period has shown what evils follow when society is not organised on a religious basis. "Our citizenship is in heaven," wrote St. Paul, and the only possible basis of any real citizenship lies in heaven. The only light that can possibly lighten the Gentiles must be a Dayspring from on High. A religious system is the link that unites our earthly citizenship with heaven. It gives a sanction to the common things of every day. It insists that commerce in ideas is of greater importance than commerce in things. When society is conscious of a religious basis and of a religious purpose, it treats its members as real and living souls or selves. Without that consciousness it treats them as mere phenomena. It labels them as "cases" and deals with living men and women as it deals with any other kind of chattel. Consciousness of religious purpose is the salt that gives its savour to society, and it is a sorry thing for society when men cast that consciousness away. Men are beginning to realise this. There

are signs to-day that that awkward self-conscious youth, society, is on the verge of admitting its need of the Father's care. Such an admission is all that is necessary for the satisfaction of the need. Organised society has only to acknowledge its need for a religious system which shall define its purpose, and that system will arise. Men of goodwill will come together as soon as they so desire. Once upon a time a certain man had a son who said to him, "Father give me the portion of thy substance that falleth unto me that I may depart from thee and spend it in a far country, with none to guide or control me." And he went away from home and wasted the portion that his father had given him. But there arose a mighty famine in the land and the lad would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; but no man gave unto him. At length he began to come to himself. "I will arise and go to my Father," he said, "and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. Make me as one of thy hired servants." And he arose and came to his Father; but while he was yet a great way off his Father saw him and came to meet him, being moved with compassion, and fell on his neck and kissed him. Society is still a great way off from God, but it is beginning to

form upon its lips the words that will give it peace : “ I will arise.” It is beginning to come to itself.

Already it is tired of seeking nourishment among the husks. For many years an Englishman has based his conduct on a knowledge of “ good form ” : certain things were “ not done.” Thus he was able to avoid some of the inconvenience that comes of the absence of any official system of religion which might give expression to his real religious feelings. Each school, each regiment, each ship was endowed with a spirit, and men worshipped the *esprit de corps* who dwelt in the unit to which they were attached. Boys, by the time they had reached the age of puberty, had undergone the most elaborate initiatory rites on the playing field or in the gymnasium. They were taught to keep themselves clean and to have a cold tub in the mornings. Gradually certain rules of conduct began to emerge, but they were rules that did not give universal satisfaction. A man might not steal bread from a baker to satisfy his hunger, but he might form himself into a company and steal anything from anyone. He need not pay the money that a tradesman had earned of him ; but he must pay the money lost in gambling, though the winner had not earned it.



Latter-day taboo was unable to satisfy the aspirations of everyone ; many tried to pretend that religion was unnecessary and that a definite purpose in life was superfluous. They said that it was of no moment what a man believed and therefore what he did (for right action is based on right belief), if only he did it with all his might. They looked benignly on the millionaire and did not ask how he had acquired his money. They based their values not on motive but on achievement. They made a boast of their outlook upon life and called themselves broad-minded. "Broadmindedness," so called, is merely a sign of shallowness and superficiality. It is the shallow rivers which are broad. Men try to content themselves with shallow superficiality when they are afraid to face the deeper problems of life or when they think that all investigation into reality is hopeless. Broad-mindedness is a sign of cowardice and despair.

And the clergy have been as superficial as the laity. They have been perturbed by the emptiness of the churches. They have seen the symptoms of disease and they have sought a palliative for them, instead of probing to the root of the trouble and trying to effect a cure even at the cost of an operation. Recently they have been discussing why men do not come to church and

trying to devise a means for their inducement. One urges the attractive powers of ceremonial : another advocates simple prayer-meetings : while yet a third says that men may be drawn in by a faithful rendering of our " Grand old Prayer Book services." One urges the charms of music : another pins his faith on the power of popular preaching. One says a parson must play the man : another says that he should go round his parish gossiping in the afternoons. The common man sees through him, as a Common Man saw through some *poseurs* long ago. The Pharisee is a hypocrite, said Jesus, and a hypocrite is a *poseur*, a man who plays a part. St. Paul may have been all things to all men. Certainly Jesus was always Himself to everybody.

The shallowness of clergy and ecclesiastical laity shows that there is something radically wrong with all modern attempts to give utterance to religion. Far reaching change will be needed, more drastic than any that is represented by a revised liturgy or bowdlerised Bible, before society can be re-formed on a religious basis. What is needed is an entire change of heart. The spirit of fear must no longer be allowed to poison the life blood of religion. In their gallant effort to revitalise the dry bones of ecclesiasticism, the clergy have devoted themselves unsparingly

to the details of their trade. But the man who is immersed in detail becomes a bore, whether he be a tripper prating of the places that he has visited, a gardener reeling off the names of roses, or a clergyman spending himself and being spent in all the fussy details of committees, clubs and chasubles. The world looks to the parson in search of a prophet and it finds him to be a bore. The parson admits as much himself when he says that the world is "indifferent to his message." The world will continue to be indifferent to the parson's message until he knows what message he would give. The world is longing for a message to-day, but before that message can be given the messengers must free themselves from the thongs that choke their utterance.

The message that the world needs is the good news of Christ that Jesus proclaimed, and the message must be given in a way that commends it to the ordinary decent man. It is only when it is possible for all men of goodwill to sing out all together, "Glory to God in the highest," that peace can come upon earth. It is only when men seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness that all the material benefits of civilisation can safely be added unto them. Science, art, industry and all the varied interests of life, will only walk together as friends when



they acknowledge that the place where they are walking is God's House.

At various times in the world's history the field of man's endeavour has been limited and he has had leisure to enjoy the knowledge that he had acquired. Such times have been the summer times of Christianity, when the flowers have been in full bloom. At such times each civilisation reaches its golden age and the glories of its creative art testify to the presence of the great Creator. The temples of Babylon and of Baalbek, the temples of India and of Egypt, the temples of Rome and of Constantinople are all monuments of Christian art.

But nature's process is continuous. Autumn succeeds to summer. The flower's seed is ripened and it is carried by God's wind to wider fields, where it falls to the ground and seems to die. So gradual is the process, so lovely are the tints of autumn, so clear are many of the autumn days and so serene, that men do not understand what is happening. They sometimes even mistake the seed pods, that drop to the ground, for fallen flowers, and cherish them. The pods are dead, but the seed itself does not die. It cannot die for it is seed from the tree of life.

Catholicism blossomed and faded many years ago. Its seed ripened and fell. The seed pods

fell, also, and for many years men took them for things of value : now they are beginning to find that they are merely lifeless husks. But during all these years the seed has been sleeping in the hearts of individual men. Stormy winds blew in from the Atlantic ; materialism held society in its icy grip,—but the seed was sleeping warmly in men's hearts.

To-day Spring is at hand. There are signs of an awakening in the social consciousness. Soon the seed will be sprouting. Already the tender green of early growth can be discerned in sheltered spots. God's rain and sun will bring the crop to sturdy growth. It is for us to tend the crop most carefully, so that the vigorous growth of the true seed of love may overpower the noxious weeds that spring up from the tares which the enemy is ever sowing in the fair field of society.

## CHAPTER XV

### A SOCIAL SANCTION

THE history of religion, as it displays itself in the successive religious systems of the world, is the story of God's dealings with mankind. Every religious system has had a definite share in the divine task of leading men to a knowledge of their divinity. In each religious system Christ has dwelt,—but each religious system has also been a dwelling place for the devil, and the devil disguises himself as Christ. The tares look like the wheat. How then shall we be able to discern the wheat from the tares, that we may know what we ourselves should cultivate? The only test of goodness or divinity is durability and changelessness. Form changes; quality is constant. *Quod ubique et quod semper* must be our motto in our search for truth. We must seek for what has existed everywhere and throughout all ages. *Quod ubique et quod semper et quod ab omnibus!* We must seek for that which has been consciously or unconsciously accepted by all men; for the



Christian Church is the Catholic Church and catholic means universal. The Catholic Church is all humanity with its face turned towards God. She includes all men who have ever tried to do their duty.

Duty or Christ is the definition of God in human hearts, and men's ideas of duty vary, just as their ideas of God vary. A man's conception of duty is the result of education. Education means "drawing out." It is the opposite of instruction, which contains the idea of "piling on to." The idea of duty which is drawn out of a lad by education is in him from the first. It is a part of his very nature ; indeed it is the only reality about his nature. It is his divinity. As the idea of duty is "drawn out" of a human being, he becomes more and more conscious of his true self ; and, if he does his duty, he not only becomes conscious of himself, but actually he makes himself. When he makes himself, he makes God. He makes God, that is, he gives expression to God ; he "presses out" into the light of day the divinity inherent in himself. Divinity is inherent in humanity, as it is inherent in all creation. But, we believe, human beings differ from all other earthly creatures in that they can draw out the divinity that is inherent in themselves. Men can educate themselves. They can

extract the divinity from out of their own being. They can give expression to God and formulate the Deity in their lives. The fulfilment or salvation of man lies in his performance of duty.

The first lesson in human education is the lesson which teaches that salvation comes only of obedience to authority. As soon as he can take note of anything, the need for discipline and acceptance of authority is forced upon a man's attention. Just as all the limbs of a man must obey the behests of his one brain, if the man is to enjoy freedom of bodily action and the control over circumstance which such freedom gives, so also the individual must obey the behests of the community, to which he belongs, if that community is to be free to direct its policy with the power that unity bestows. In primitive society, for very safety's sake, men were compelled to give their unquestioning allegiance to the one man who "could" guarantee the security of the community, the eldest son of the Kin, the King or Koenig.

Gradually the circle of freedom widened out. It widened out as the isolated communities of primitive days sacrificed themselves and merged their separate existence into larger groupings. Gradually the tribes came together and formed kingdoms. Gradually the kingdoms came

together and formed leagues and empires. Each wider grouping of communities meant greater freedom for the individuals who composed those communities, because each wider grouping meant a lessening of the friction between state and state. It meant a lessening of the danger of conflagration between one community and another and consequently it meant a relaxation of the allegiance which an individual was forced to render to his own community. Progress towards freedom comes only of self-sacrifice. Not only must a man's limbs obey the behests of his brain ; not only must the members of a state obey the behests of the state ; but also the state, in its turn, must learn to sacrifice itself and live at unity with all other states, that humanity may become one. Civic progress resembles all other progress. All progress is advancement from the false freedom of appearances to the true freedom of the spirit. The primitive community controlled the apparent liberty of the individual, but it gave him a large measure of freedom from the terrors of his environment. The *pax romana* destroyed the sovereignty of separate states, but it enabled the citizens of those states to enjoy more real freedom than had been possible when their native countries had been independent.



Freedom, indeed, is the opposite of independence. Perfect freedom is only to be obtained when the individual and the community are perfectly at one with God and completely dependent on Him. When the ideal citizen of the ideal state is perfectly obedient to the state's commands, the apparent separation of self from self in individual men will become completely and manifestly illusory. Heaven will be realised on earth. The millennium will have arrived. Christ's advent will be complete in all its fulness. The Christ will be apparent in every man.

The purpose of a religious system is to promote the coming of the Kingdom upon earth. It is to induce the individual to bow to the authority of the community. But the individual will only bow to the authority of the community when he is convinced that that authority is in accordance with righteousness. Thus a religious system has two functions to perform. It has first to see that the purpose of the community does actually accord with what men think to be right. It has second to convince its constituents of the righteousness of the common purpose. It has to see to it that the mind of the individual, the mind of the community and the mind of God are identical.

The religious system that has prevailed in any period of the world's history has always been suited to the conditions of its time as well in the lesson which it sought to enforce as in its organisation. In primitive days when society was at a stage in its development analogous to that of a child, the absolute necessity of social discipline as an essential factor to progress of any sort was insisted upon with all the sanction that religion could supply. Primitive religious systems are never chosen by the mass of men who live by them. They are imposed upon the generality of mankind by the handful of wise men who sway the multitudes. It was the few elders and the few medicine-men of the tribe who decreed what things were taboo. It was the few wizards who used the powers of magic to enforce law upon the subject many. Thus, at a stage in their development when their passions render co-operation difficult, individual men are compelled to accept discipline and to subordinate their private ambitions to the common purpose; the community is enabled to obtain unity of action for itself; and its constituents gain that increase to their individual powers which comes of co-operation.

The old law enforced upon men the necessity of discipline and self-sacrifice, but it was powerless to

give a large measure of freedom to the individual. The centralisation which does not content itself with securing liberty of action for the community, but which aims also at conferring greater reality of freedom upon the constituents of society, must be a centralisation in which the constituents of society concur ; and the old law was imposed upon the many by the few. It prepared men for the revelation of the Christ in and by Jesus. Jesus made known “the mystery, which had been kept in silence through times eternal,” and the mystery was the truth that the world is upheld only by the voluntary sacrifice of Self. This was the good news and the preaching of Jesus Christ, that men could find their true freedom, only when they fulfilled their divine nature and of their own accord decided to sacrifice themselves.

By example as well as by precept Jesus proclaimed the rule of God. He told men of the rule and He asked them to make the stupendous venture and to choose of their own free wills to sacrifice themselves that they might find themselves. “This is my commandment,” He said, “That ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command



you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you.” Henceforth men of their own free wills must choose to discipline themselves. Human society had come of age. It must prepare itself to assume its inheritance of divinity. Henceforward its aim must be the attainment of the lawless life of perfect liberty.

Catholicism represented the first attempt of humanity as a whole to enjoy its heritage and voluntarily to organise itself in God’s service. It failed because the old poison of fear had permeated it. Men were afraid of one another, and they tried to force unity and centralisation upon one another at the point of the sword and by means of the inquisitor’s torture chamber. While men slept the enemy was sowing tares in the field of society and men awoke to find themselves the slaves of a legalism more terrible than any that had gone before. Hastily they threw themselves into the task of uprooting the tares, but, in their sleepy blindness, they only succeeded in destroying much fruitful corn. The beauty of worship and the joy of human comradeship nearly disappeared. The joyfulness of voluntary self-sacrifice and the righteousness of self-imposed

discipline were forgotten. It is not without significance that such customs as fasting and such self-imposed restrictions as monastic vows not only gradually fell into desuetude, but the very attitude of mind of the society in which they had flourished, ceased to be comprehensible to men.

Protestantism, the second attempt to attain to the lawless life of perfect liberty, was purely negative. It was a counsel of despair. Men had been so shocked with the abuses of the old system that they now tried to manage their affairs without any system at all. The need for discipline was altogether forgotten. Each man claimed to be a law unto himself. The second attempt to attain to the lawless life of perfect liberty resulted in an anarchy of imperfection more terrible than any other form of tyranny. Society became the slave of things. It was necessary that its education should be begun again from the beginning. It had forgotten its alphabet. It no longer remembered that some sort of discipline is necessary for any sort of freedom.

To-day, we may hope that this elementary lesson has at last been learnt again. Surely the discords of these latter times have brought home to the minds of men the need of discipline

and of submission to authority? The failure of Protestantism has taught men the need of discipline. The failure of Catholicism had taught them that true discipline cannot be enforced upon an unwilling people.

The problem before society to-day is the reconciliation of freedom with authority. This problem is not insoluble, because God is the ultimate source of all authority and also of all freedom. He is all-mighty, the source of every manifestation of power and energy. He alone is perfectly free. He is the King. In Him all freedom and authority reside. In Him, therefore, lies the answer to our present problem. It is only when the individual and community cheerfully bow to His authority and identify their wills with His, that they can attain to freedom. Religion exists in order to enable men to ascertain the will of God and to give them strength to carry it into effect. Religion, therefore, should help society to solve its problems.

But religion works slowly and at first imperceptibly. It is the leaven of divinity stirring in men's hearts. Men share God's nature. God deals with them as sons. He cannot force Himself upon the self in man, for the self in man is divine. If He were to force Himself upon Himself, He would be denying His own divinity.



and sovereignty. In creation He is exiled from Himself, and imprisoned in the fetters of unreality. But of His own accord He went into exile. Of His own accord He placed those fetters upon Himself. Although He is in exile, He is still the King. Only His own royal power can remove the fetters which He has imposed upon Himself. What those fetters are a man knows very well, for they are the limitations with which the man himself is bound. The Self in a man seems to be tied to the bodily form which it animates. It is limited, as it seems, to a definite spot and a definite period of time. A man cannot be in two places at once. The Self in one man seems to be entirely separate and distinct from the Self in another. Such are the limitations which a man finds to be imposed upon himself. They constitute the authority to which he needs must bow. He cannot escape them. He is bound to accept them, but he can accept them willingly or unwillingly. When he accepts them willingly, he is identifying His will with God's perfect will. He is acting divinely and therefore He is free. Frank recognition and acceptance of authority alone give freedom. It is the punctual man who is most the master of his time. It is the man who concentrates his whole attention on a matter in hand who is most the master of the world at

large. But a man can make a fetish of his punctuality as he can of any other method of his business. Recognition of authority leads to slavery when it is regarded as something worshipful in itself apart from the purpose which it is intended to serve. The task before society to-day is to use authority for its proper purpose.

The ultimate and real purpose of all authority is the formulation of God upon earth. God intends all limitations to be a means whereby He may express Himself. He voluntarily defines Himself within the limits of form that He may have the joy of seeing His own reflection. Systematised religion exists in order to help men to carry God's will into effect on earth. In other words, systematised religion exists in order to help God to realise Himself on earth in all His perfection, as He is in Heaven. It is an affair of forms and limitations and definitions. It is not primarily concerned with that state from which all limitation is absent and where there are no restrictions. Quite incidentally it prepares a man for perfect and unbounded heavenly bliss. A good citizen of earth is already a good citizen of heaven, for heaven is everywhere. If a man makes nothing of his life in this world, he will make nothing of it in the next. If he makes anything of it in this world, he is already making

it real, and heaven is only the pious term for reality. But as long as a man's main preoccupation is to avoid discomfort in this world and the next, it is quite certain that he will not find heaven on either side of the grave. St. Peter, so men used to say, is guardian of the heavenly portals, and whatever else St. Peter may have achieved, he conquered his cowardice! For many hundreds of years systematic religion has been diverted from its proper purpose. Men were afraid to think for themselves and they worshipped authority as a good thing in itself. Their fears made them into bullies, and they tried to force authority upon one another. During all the chaos of oceanic times the only force that man conceived of as a sanction for the claims of authority was still the same old fear upon which their fathers relied. Thus submission to authority came to be considered as incompatible with freedom, while really such submission is the first essential towards freedom. The task before society to-day is to reform itself into a religious system of which the authority is based on love. The task before society to-day is to restore systematised religion to its proper purpose.

There is a good hope that society will succeed in its task. As the magicians of ancient days secured their people immunity from the lawless



pranks of malicious sprites and set them free from fear, so, in these latter days, wise men have been inquiring into nature's secrets and they have loosed the bonds of fear with which sectarianism had enthralled mankind. The sectarian despised the earth and turned it into hell. The scientist has found nothing too lowly for respectful investigation and he has found heaven everywhere.

“Earth's cramm'd with heaven and every common bush  
afire with God ;

But only those who see take off their shoes :

The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.”

So sings the poet, and his words are true. Earth is cramm'd with heaven ; it is the garden of the Lord. But we need to reverse the order of the words :—“Only those who doff their shoes can see.” Humility comes before sight. For many many years the scientist has been humbling himself. He has been studying the habits of the earth-worm : he has been watching the kettle's steam : he has been meditating on the apple's fall. He has been humbling himself, and lo ! he is exalted. He has reaped the reward of his humility. Earth, air and electricity no longer frighten him. He has tamed them to his uses. The meek have inherited the earth. The weary and the heavy laden have gone to Christ and He

has given them rest. They have taken His yoke upon them and learnt of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart. They have found rest unto their souls. The old burdens, imposed on men by fear, have been loosed. The old thongs have been untied and the heavy load of fear is fallen to the ground. Men are changing their fear of God's cruelty into a feeling of awe at His Majesty. They are gaining a wider understanding of His being than they had dreamed of. They are learning the first and last lesson. They are learning the meaning of the word ONE. What men used to worship in ignorance the scientist is again setting forth unto them. The God, that made the world and all things therein, is Lord of heaven and earth. He dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; neither is He served by men's hands as though He needed anything, seeing that He Himself giveth to all life and breath and all things ; for in Him we live and move and have our being : as certain so-called heathen poets have said, " For we also are his offspring."

Men are divine. The earth is divine. The society of the coming age will be firm based on a consciousness of its divinity. It will be based on that rock on which Jesus sought to build His church. Jesus could hope to erect a stable and a real society, which should endure throughout

eternity, as soon as one of His followers had grasped the fact that He was Christ. "Thou art the Christ," said Simon; "And thou art Peter," Jesus replied, "the rock on which I will build my church." Jesus could hope to erect a church on Peter's belief, because that belief might grow into Paul's conviction that Christ was all and in all. Let it not be thought blasphemy to say that the self in man is God. Jesus, our Master, quoted many ancient sayings with approval and one such saying was the sentence, "I have said ye are Gods."

Men are not cowards. They are God, and the only plea that they allow themselves to hear is the appeal to their divinity. Any master knows that a boy will respond to an appeal to his honour, when all other appeal is vain. And this is true of men. Not all the pains of hell or earth shall frighten a man from fornication. He may restrain his bodily desires when he hears God whispering within himself, and when he sees God looking at him through the eyes of the partner of his shame. The sanction of society will some day be that real sanction on which Jesus based His claim to authority, the sanction given by the divine voice which speaks in the hearts of ordinary people. "By what authority doest thou these things?" asked the priests.



“ I will ask of you one question,” Jesus replied, “ the baptism of John was it from heaven or from men ? ” And they reasoned with themselves, saying, “ If we shall say ‘ from heaven ’ he will say, why then did ye not believe him ? But should we say ‘ from men ’ ”—they feared the people. *Vox populi, vox dei*. People know what is right. On that knowledge the sanction of society will stand.

In the first ages of the proclamation of Jesus’ message, the world was kindled with enthusiasm. Men knew that they were something more than mortal. They knew that they were God. But the message was caught up and shrouded in cold, dank mists of fear. No longer did a crowned triumphant Man reign smiling from the Tree. Instead there hung upon the cross of suffering a Being, calm, serene, and utterly aloof from ordinary humanity. All hope of reformation of the world in God dwindled away and almost disappeared. May we dare to hope that the Reformation, for which Jesus lived and died, is coming now ? “ Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, for the King of Glory is come in. And who is the King of Glory ? Even the Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.” And the King of Glory is everywhere, wherever men have eyes to see.

He may be seen in the quality of things, in the energy of plants, in the consciousness of animals, in the duty or Christ that knows Itself in the heart of man. That is the only message which can reform society. That is the only basis on which the world exists. That is the only thought which makes existence tolerable to men who are irritated by a sense of their divinity. That is the only sanction which will really hallow social life on earth.

In a healthy community, just as in a healthy man's body, the obedience rendered by the members or limbs to the centralising authority or brain is quite unconscious and unirksome. Revolutions and unrest are the growing pains of states. To-day the revolutionary era is drawing to a close. The Oceanic Period is passing away. Some day society will enjoy the mastery of its limbs. Some day the common recognition of the divine sanction will give to men the perfect freedom of God's service.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A SOCIAL FORM

“ BEWARE of false prophets,” Jesus said, “ which come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles ? even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit : but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. By their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into my Kingdom.” The prophets of 400 years ago professed to prophesy in the Lord’s name. They were careful to free the form of their religion from all appearance of idolatry : they came in sheep’s clothing. But the fruits produced by their parodies of a religious system made but a sorry sort of crop. Fears and suspicions between class and class ; unbridled vice and immorality ; political jealousies and industrial miseries, such have been the fruit produced by men who took more account of the form of a religious system than of its content.



Every conscious human effort to purge away the abuses in any religious system has always been destructive rather than constructive at first. The corn is destroyed ; the tares remain ; and the last state of society seems to be worse than the first. It is not really worse, for years of terrible hunger in a field that is devoid of all except tares, begin at last to clear men's eyes. At last men learn that it is profitable for them to spend their energy in cultivating the good rather than in attempting to destroy the evil. This teaching should not be hard to understand. It is good horticulture and it is good sense. The best method of keeping a garden free from weeds is by encouraging the sturdy growth of the cultivated plants ; and in every sphere of life it is always a waste of energy for a man to resist the evil, for evil is sheer nothingness. Sometimes it is necessary to seem to resist it, but such resistance is vanity unless it be inspired by the desire to cultivate the good. It is profitable to harry an enemy's body if the object of such harrying be the cultivation of his soul. It is worse than useless to harry his body from a desire to harry that which is evil, for that is merely to beat the wind. Evil has no reality about it. In God's good time He sends His angels into the harvest field and they

cleanse it of all appearance of noxious growth. When men are wise enough to aim at making the real apparent, evil will lose the appearance of reality.

The task before society to-day is not to destroy the old things, but to restore them to their proper purpose. The mistake that was made 400 years ago must not be repeated. A real reformation of society is not to be achieved by breaking up the ancient forms that are venerable from long usage ; society will only be reformed when its organisation, be it old or new, is inspired with the living spirit of Christ. Little enough remains of the ancient forms to-day. The old coherent social system disappeared when catholicism was broken up into a number of little cliques, and to-day humanity is organised in the form of separate and entirely independent nations. If those nations are ever again to enjoy the freedom which unity bestows, it behoves them to cherish tenderly what trace of order still survives.

Many countries to-day ignore the religious basis on which they rest. They make no attempt to give formal expression to the purpose which animates them. In France, for instance, the very name of God has been expunged from the books provided in the state schools, and many

people assert that France is officially atheistic or, at least, agnostic. This is not the case. France insists that her children should do their duty, and duty is the human definition of God. France owns allegiance to God, and, as is testified by her soldiers' graves, the God to whom she owns allegiance is the Christian God, Who bids a man to sacrifice his body that he may make his soul. France owns allegiance to God. She lacks a system of religion which should enable her to glory in her allegiance. England, on the other hand, with her characteristic genius for "muddling through," pieced together some of the fragments of the ancient system, when it was destroyed, and labelled them as the "Church of England." The "Church of England" was only a temporary makeshift, devised to tide the nation over a period of unsettlement. To-day there is a smouldering fire of resentment against her. Men feel that she has not been giving them what they have a right to expect of her. They feel that she does not express the real religious conviction of the nation. They are tempted to destroy. At any time the smouldering fire of resentment may blaze up into the flames of disestablishment.

Disestablishment is advocated by many, if not by most, of our younger clergymen. The



parson of to-day is apt to scoff at the subservience of church to state. It relegates him to the position of a mouthpiece for the expression of the religious aspiration of ordinary mortals, and this he considers to be derogatory to his own importance. He likes to feel that he is a superior person, shedding his light on lesser men. He proclaims, therefore, that he wishes to "liberate" the church. By this expression he merely means that he wishes to subject her altogether to the tyranny of men who happen to share his views. The "liberationist" clergyman always assumes that he can speak for the church. Indeed, the younger the curate, the more certain he is that he has a correct knowledge of "the church's teaching."

Liberationist views are also held by many, if not most, of our nonconformist brethren. Even the Independents seem to have no real conception of the possibility of combining freedom with form and authority, and they regard establishment as a sort of slavery. The nonconformist votes for disestablishment, sometimes because he thinks that disestablishment would increase the efficiency of the church, sometimes because he considers it to be unfair that one religious organisation should seem to be more favoured by the state than others, and some-

times from less worthy motives. The old Adam is very strong even in the best of us, and Mrs. Pastor is a little jealous of Mrs. Rector ! She is rather annoyed when Mrs. Rector patronises her.

Disestablishment is also advocated by many politicians. The motives of politicians are often obscure, but usually they have some connection with votes.

The ordinary decent man is rather tired of the whole question. He sees that there is something amiss with things as they are. He knows that at least some parsons are over inclined to value the loaves and fishes. He cannot understand why the rector of a town parish, numbering many thousands of souls, should receive, perhaps, a tithe of the emoluments given to the rector of a tiny village in the country. He knows that disestablishment was of benefit to the body which arrogates to itself the title of Church of Ireland. He jumps to the conclusion that disestablishment would be equally beneficial to the Church of England.

Before we disestablish the Church of England it would be well to consider whether disestablishment would really cure the evils which undoubtedly need to be cured. In the first place the fabric of our church is our most precious possession, and by fabric is meant here not only her buildings

but also her whole organisation. Around the church clusters all the greatness of our race. Nearly every name in English history has hallowed her with association. Why should the nation hand over its most precious heritage to a company of clergymen and eccentric laymen? Disestablishment would make for the slavery instead of for the freedom of the church.

In the next place, to descend from the sublime to the utterly ridiculous, there will always be snobs in our midst. Mrs. Rector will patronise Mrs. Pastor till the crack of doom, whether Mr. Rector is turned out of his rectory or not. Nor is it by any means certain that a disestablished church is more efficient than a church which groans beneath the weight of establishment. It is the function of a religious system to express the religious feelings of ordinary decent men, and there are quite as many freaks and prigs in nonconformity as there are in the established churches of Scotland and England. Indeed the very fact of establishment has secured that those eminently sane and decent and ordinary men, the churchwardens and sidesmen of the church, duly elected by the ordinary ratepayers, should have at least some say in the management of our national heritage. Undoubtedly the best argument against disestablishment is the ascer-



tainable fact that the "liberationists" are pursuing an aim which is impossible of attainment. The constitution of the United States of America claims absolute religious freedom for all American citizens. The history of the relations that have existed between the civic authorities at Washington and the Mormons shows that the American constitution is a dream impossible of fulfilment. Even the freest of the free churches cannot away with all civic control. Every chapel has its trust deeds, which, explicitly or implicitly, define its rule of faith. It is impossible in this realm of England for any other potentate to hold sway than the King in Parliament. Parliamentary control is in fact supreme over every corporation in the kingdom, however carefully such control may be disguised. Instead of attempting the impossible task of abolishing the authority of parliament over the religious system, it is wiser frankly to accept such authority as one of the inevitable limitations of corporate life on earth and to make the best of it. It is true, indeed, that our religious system needs amendment, but if our eyes are blinded by self-conceit, by petty jealousy, by hope of political advantage or by laziness and fear of effort, then we shall not see clearly where the evil is, which we seek to destroy. So far

from effecting a reformation of society, we shall only succeed in smashing up the last remnants of form that it still possesses. We shall not eliminate that poison of fear against which true religion ever strives.

Before any improvement in the existing system can be effected it is necessary to consider generally the function which a religious system should fulfil. The proper function of a religious system is to make clear the corporate aspiration and purpose, to which parliament gives visible expression by its enactments. Thus parliament passes laws which deal with education, with sanitation, with commerce and with many other subjects. The religious system should proclaim the purpose which lies behind the national scheme of education and sanitation and commerce. It should proclaim the purpose which animates the whole of public life. Parliament is the brain of the state, but the state, if it is to be a human society, needs more than a brain ; just as an animal needs more than a brain before it has the right to be considered human. An animal earns the title to humanity as soon as it regulates its life by purpose. A collection of human beings earns the right to be called a living corporation, when purpose regulates its policy.

Before an individual can impose his will and

purpose upon his limbs, he must know what his will or purpose is. He formulates his purpose in his religion. Thus his purpose in life may be to "have a good time," or to accumulate much money, or to gain the approbation of his fellows. He will succeed only if he have set clearly before him the mark at which he aims. That is the meaning of the saying "ask and ye shall receive." The successful man, even the man who succeeds in perfection of evil, is necessarily a religious man. The successful man is the man who knows what he wants; and the man who knows what he wants is a religious man; he has formulated his purpose. His purpose may be good or it may be evil. His religion may consist mostly of Christianity or mostly of idolatry; but, whether his religion be mostly Christianity or mostly idolatry, the successful man is always a religious man. The religion of the individual clarifies the purpose of the individual. The religious system of the state performs the same function for the community, and clarity of purpose is as essential for a successful state as clarity of purpose is essential for a successful individual. The religious system of the state may be Christian: it may be idolatrous. If it be idolatrous, then the state will succeed in the perfection of nothingness—sheer chaos.



However clearly an individual may know his purpose, he can only impose that purpose on his limbs by means of his executive department, the brain. However clearly a state may know its purpose, it can only enforce that purpose on its members by means of parliament. Frequently thought cannot impose itself on the body of the individual. Sometimes the brain refuses to carry it into effect. "For to will is present with me," wrote St. Paul, "but to do that which is good is not. For the good, which I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise." Parliament often acts out of accordance with the sense of the community. It is essential that the community should have some means of expressing its sense. Change of mind is needed before a real change of policy becomes possible. But before the mind can be changed, there must be a mind to be changed. A religious system should be the mind of the community. It should have absolute freedom of thought and expression, but no coercive power. Its only function should be to discover and to formulate the aim of the state.

For many years this essential function has been performed by the "fourth estate," the press. The duty has been well discharged, but it is now becoming increasingly apparent that the freedom

of the press is too great a power to leave in the hands of private, irresponsible people, who may have their own interests to further. We are being compelled to re-form a religious system which shall be authorised to give vent to the purpose of the whole community.

Before men can be of one mind in a house, it is necessary that each man should know his own mind. The individual must clarify his aim before he can be a useful member of society and take a real part in public life. But before there can be any real public life in which he can take a part, it is necessary that society as a whole should clarify and proclaim its purpose. The individual owes it to the state and the state owes it to the individual to think clearly. The religious system should be the thinking apparatus of the state, and to-day it is our duty as Englishmen not to smash up the system that has come down to us from ancient days, but to inspire it with life. Instead of reducing the Church of England to the position of a private sect, we should try so to enlarge her boundaries that all decent men could feel at home within her walls. We should aim not at disestablishing her, but at re-establishing her in the hearts of the people. If she were established in popular affection and not only in law, then she might become in fact

what she is in name—the Church of England, the people of England, with its face turned towards God. England would then be able to proclaim her purpose and by the very act of proclamation that purpose would become intensified and clarified. By means of the establishment the state at least tries to give official recognition to its religious aim. Divine worship is performed daily in the Royal Navy. Parliament is opened with prayer. The King is anointed by the Archbishop. Instead of abolishing what sanctity is already given to the affairs of the state in formal corporate ways, we should be better advised to aim at the formal sanctification of the whole of our public life.

Not only is it our duty as Englishmen to preserve what remains of our ancient system of organised corporate religion. It is our duty as members of the whole human family. Before men can be of one mind in a house, it is necessary that each man know his own mind. So also the nations of the world will only live at peace and amity together, when each nation has its purpose defined in some system of thought. The great need of humanity to-day is that it should reform itself as a truly catholic, world-embracing church. Men have long been dreaming dreams of leagues of nations. To-day it seems that there is a great



hope that these dreams may some day come true. If they come true, their realisation will be due, not to the cleverness of human treaties but to the humility of human research and investigation. The humble men, who reverently probed into God's laws of working and made it possible for men to navigate the air, are the men whose labours make some sort of unity essential to the existence of mankind on earth. Unity of purpose is essential to the world to-day. Pope and Caesar sat side by side at Rome in ancient days. Politics must be based on settled purpose at the New Rome, if ever such a city arises to be the effective centre of human unity. We can best prepare for the new era by making the best of our present institutions. When each nation has its purpose clearly set before it in some definite system of thought, then and then only will it be possible for the nations of the world to come together ; then and then only will human longing for unity be satisfied.

It is not too late to re-form a real Church of England, nor is it even yet too late to use our existing fabric as its home. The "Enabling Bill" may erect a corporation to control our national ecclesiastical organisation, which shall reduce our national church to the level of an episcopal sect : but the "Enabling Bill" can

always be repealed by the same body that passed it. The permission granted to the officials of the established church to set themselves above the commonly accepted opinion about marriage with a deceased wife's sister has made those officials the servants of two masters : but it can even yet be laid down which master they shall serve, —the national conscience as shown forth by parliamentary legislation or their own interpretation of what is right. It is not dishonourable in a servant of the state to obey the ordinances of the state even when he thinks those ordinances are wrong. It is only dishonourable that he should obey them without protest and without an effort to effect their change. By all means let those priests, who think that marriage with a deceased wife's sister or one between two first cousins is wrong, try to induce the nation to share their views. But until the nation shares their views let them be willing honourably to earn their wages by performing those ceremonies which they are paid to perform. Otherwise they cannot dare to say a word against conscientious objection of any sort, and civic life becomes impossible.

A national church proclaims the belief of the nation, whether that belief be right or wrong. Indeed, consisting as it does of imperfect men and

women, the state will certainly be partly right and partly wrong in its belief. But whether right or wrong, that belief must be stated clearly by all loyal clergymen of the state. By their very act of proclamation the clergy cast a searchlight on the right and wrong, and make it easier to cultivate the right.

A national church proclaims the belief of the living nation. It does not proclaim the belief of the dead. Certainly no Englishman to-day believes precisely what was believed by the saints of old. Nor can he. No man with the power of perception can believe on Tuesday precisely and exactly what he believed on Monday ; for all belief is relative and ever changing. Any knowledge that we think to hold on any subject is influenced in some degree by every access of fresh knowledge that comes to us on every other subject. Even if we would, we cannot, for instance believe exactly and precisely what our ancestors believed about heaven. Our knowledge of the earth's material shape prevents us. It is only when we are incapable of further knowledge of any sort that we can profess to have absolute knowledge of anything whatsoever. It is only then that we can dare to fix our little knowledge in a formula which must remain unchanging. Such formulas are, therefore, sure signs of death.



The Roman Catholic Church claims, we are sometimes told, to be constant in its belief. But is it? Did not the Council of Trent—to say nothing of the Vatican Council—record a change of belief as great as that recorded by the articles or formularies of any of our so called reformed churches? Belief is ever changing: faith may be constant. We do not nowadays believe the things about Jesus that our ancestors believed. But we can still trust to Him. We can still take His hand to guide us on the Way of Life. We can still hold fast to the faith delivered to the saints and strive to be as brave as they, when we place our shoulders beneath our present cross. Truth is constant: human apprehension of truth varies from minute to minute. Religion is constant: religious systems change. Truth and religion belong to the sphere of eternity. A religious system and any expression of human apprehension of religion are ephemeral. They belong to the passing moment only: they are to serve as a guide to definite action at a given time.

It is not too late to re-form the people of England into a living church. Not only the Enabling Act but also the Act of Uniformity can be repealed. The pulpits in the lecture halls attached to our places of worship can yet be thrown open to any decent man of sufficient

learning, and in our very shrines themselves any decent man can yet be allowed to serve the altar, who has been duly elected by his fellows to be their agent.

When once a church of England has been formed again, she will not send out paid missionaries to interfere with the religious systems of other countries. But every Englishman abroad will be—as even now he is—a vehicle for the propagation of that faith by which he really lives. That faith can be expressed quite simply. Some Englishmen put all their trust in riches: others believe that in the indulgence of carnal appetites can true happiness be found: others are lukewarm and seem to have no faith. All decent Englishmen, who try to go the Way that Jesus trod, believe that they should follow after truth and do their duty at any cost to their material estate. That is no ignoble faith. Duty is the definition of God in human hearts: it is the Christ: it is God sacrificing Himself as He struggles here on earth: it gives the only rule of conduct that fits the dignity of immortal man. And truth provides the only object worthy of his search, an object that will never finally be attained by men who live on earth; for truth is God in the glory of reality. Truth is THAT WHICH IS, and THAT WHICH IS is God.

In the days to come professional disturbers of other people's creeds and forms of worship will cease to be. They will be ostracised from decent company. Instead there will be grave ambassadors accredited from one religious system to another, men apt to learn and, therefore, quite unconsciously to themselves, as apt to teach. In the New Rome a temple will be found containing many chapels. In each chapel at first men will worship God according to the rites and ceremonies bequeathed them by their fathers. Later, perhaps, a common tradition of worship will arise.

Halls will cluster round the temple, forming an intellectual centre for the world, a genuine university. In those halls men that have received their knowledge of the truth through different channels will proclaim the names of all the heroes of humanity. They will proclaim the names of Jesus and Mansur, of Confucius and the Buddha, of Zoroaster and Muhammad, of Socrates and the philosophers of Greece. They will proclaim the names of men who have made discoveries of any sort, for every fresh discovery of truth is an uncovering of God. Nor will they fail to take a pride in the earliest gropings of the human race towards the light. Each wonderful invention of our age rests on inventions quite as



wonderful to men of bygone ages. Men will proclaim the names of Peter, Paul, and Mary and ten thousand thousand saints who, seeking God, have found Him in the love they bore their fellows and in work well done. They will proclaim the names of saints who, even as they found the Lord, showed Him to others by the manner of their lives. And thus, perhaps, in time a true church catholic will gradually arise. A public opinion will be formed commensurate with all humanity. This dream is not beyond the possibility of fulfilment. There are many mansions in that house of our Father, which is our present earthly home. Yet every mansion belongs to Him and in our recognition of His ownership lies all the hope of human unity. We may hope that some day there will be on earth one system of religion, in which will be reflected all the light that comes to earth from heaven. If ever such a system does arise it will be based on truth, and it will be cemented by that community of sentiment, which we call sympathy or love or fellowship.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A SOCIAL STANDARD

AMID the chaos of our time nothing is so necessary as a definite social creed and a definite social standard, but if they are to be enforced by love and not by fear, they must be of such a sort that the ordinary members of society will wholeheartedly concur in them. The only authoritative definition of God which all men will agree to accept is the definition of God which is implanted in every human heart—duty. The only test for membership in the universal church should be moral and not intellectual. It should be the question whether a man is prepared to do his duty in this present world, even at the cost of suffering to himself. That was the only test which Jesus applied to His followers.

Jesus never asked men what they thought about the Virgin Birth or the doctrine of the Trinity. He had only one test for His followers. Were they willing to drink of the cup that He was to drink? Were they willing to follow the

dictates of adventurous love even at the cost of sacrifice of self? "If any man would come after me," He said, "Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" . . . and, "He that is not against us is with us" . . . and, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my mother and sister and father." The creed of Jesus is the creed of every decent man. It is the belief that a man must do his duty in this present world.

To assert the obligation of duty is, of course, to make a statement of belief in which the intellect plays its part. Man is not a purely spiritual being. He has a body which contains a brain. It is not possible for him to conduct himself as though he were brainless. But the only intellectual test for membership in a catholic or universal church should be a test that all decent men are willing to accept. And such a test should deal with the present moment only. It should not concern itself with dubious occurrences of the past, nor with problematical happenings of the future—in this world or "the next"! Society deals with tangible quantity not with intangible quality. The creed of society organised on a religious basis, therefore, (the creed, that is, of the true catholic church,) should deal with quantity not quality. It may not



assert more than this : that a man must do his duty and that he must seek his fulfilment in work well done, cost what it may.

The first essential to the reformation of society, therefore, is that our present "creeds" should be ousted from their position as tests of church membership or office : and that they should be restored to their proper purpose, which is to serve as vague, inaccurate and symbolical descriptions of things which go too deep for words. Any attempt to explain God or eternal life or any other ultimate concern, however ingenious it may be, must manifestly fall so far short of the truth that it is of little value except to the man who makes it. To him it is the expression of his living faith. To others it is a form of words of greater or less value, but at best merely a heroic and sometimes inspiring attempt to perform the impossible. Thus the Trinitarian dogma that God is Three and One at the same time is obviously an attempt to express the inexpressible. For this reason it is preferable to the more specious definition of the Unitarians, who, if we may judge them by their name, assert that God is without the element of plurality. Man cannot even satisfactorily define himself, and until he can explain himself it is blasphemy for him to pretend to the ability to explain God.

A clergyman merely makes a fool of himself if he asks his children to hold opinions about the Virgin Birth and the Holy Trinity, when better scholars and greater saints than himself are not of one mind on these points. He makes a fool of himself because the children can only utter a parrot-wise repetition of other men's opinions. This is exactly what Jesus hated. He loathed those hawkers of second-hand opinions, the Scribes and Pharisees, and men contrasted His teaching with theirs. He spoke with authority, originality and life. They were entangled in the traditions of death. God is life, and life is indefinable. The scientist can tell us all about beetles when they are dead and displayed in the cases of museums. About the hopes and fears and ambitions of a living beetle, he can tell us nothing. Life eludes all attempts at its analysis and classification. To insist on the absolute accuracy of any one analysis or classification of the Living God is to subvert men to commit blasphemy. It is to invite them to seek the living among the dead, and, as the living is not to be found among the dead, the subverted man is led on to commit idolatry. Idolatry infects its devotees with the poison of death. It prompts them to give way to lethargy. "Here is a ready-made God," it says, "fall down and

worship." Christianity, true religion, is alive. It points men to the Way that leads to God and bids them follow it up for themselves. A truly Christian system of society is full of the dynamic force of life. It is built on that rock on which Jesus sought to rear His church, the rock of Peter's belief that Jesus was the son of a God Who is alive.

The church of the future will have a vital creed ; a creed that will deal with the moral or real life of her children and not merely with their intellect. She will demand that they put their trust in God and do their duty, cost what it may. She will not try to prove heavenly reality by earthly happenings. She will use earthly happenings as a means whereby heavenly reality may be dimly discerned. When Thomas doubted the truth of our Lord's resurrection, he was told, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." Blessed are they who do not desire material evidence for spiritual occasions. Blessed are they who do not seek to prove the greater by the less. Nothing ultimate can be proved. A man cannot prove his own reality nor any sort of reality. Nor can he say what duty is. He can only behave as though the world had something real about it. He can only obey the dictates of his conscience and perform



his duty. He can only trust. This is precisely what decent men already do. They do their duty, but they do not talk about it. The man who behaves as though the world had nothing real about it and the man who denies the claims of duty are already the outcasts of the human race. Their company is shunned by decent men. Sometimes they are even interned in lunatic asylums and prisons. They are already outside the pale of that visible church catholic, which is all humanity. The official churches have only to recognise the creed which is already the creed of the true catholic church and society will find that it is once again a living organism instinct with the spirit of Christ, and the official churches will find that they have become one church and that that one church is coterminous with society.

Not only the creeds but all the accessories of worship must be restored to their proper purpose, from which they have been diverted by the fears of men, and this is particularly necessary in the case of the Bible. When the images were cast down from their places in the churches, the Bible was erected in their stead and for many years in England that Holy Book has been perverted to idolatrous uses. Bibliolatry is still all too common to-day. Twice during the past year has the writer of this present essay heard of

people who refused to utter the word "peradventure," because in the book of Psalms occurs the verse, "If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day." An inserted comma after the word peradventure had effectually darkened the lives of those persons with a terrible dread. These are cases of extreme bibliolatry, but again and again during the past four years foolish men have treated the Bible as a sort of jig-saw puzzle ; dovetailing verses together, they have tried to ascertain the exact date when the war should end. They have treated the Bible as an oracle and they have been fools for their pains. The geologist has long been tapping at the rocks ; the anthropologist has long been studying man's origins ; the explorer has long been excavating in the ruined cities in the East ; the scholar has long been poring over the pages of Holy Writ and comparing word with word. The day for bibliolatry is passed away. The ordinary decent man will never again bow down to the Bible and worship it. He has escaped from the fearful trammels of dead language. He no longer thinks of the oracular, " Gospel according to St. John " : he thinks of St. John's " version of the good news." He knows quite well that human versions of anything are apt to be inaccurate.

He knows quite well that legends quickly gather round great men. He no longer worships the Bible as an idol or as an oracle. He no longer treats it as an end in itself.

The official churches have only to follow the example of ordinary healthy men and the Bible will be used, as it should be used in our churches, as a collection of human documents which tell the tale of man's dim gropings after God. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. There is no reason why the Jewish scriptures alone should find a place within the covers of our Bible. The ideal church will be an universal church. Much of the Old Testament should be deleted as unfit for general reading. The untrained mind cannot separate the idea of punishment from the idea of vengeance, and we know now that God is not a God of vengeance. His worst "punishment" is to give men the anaesthetic of oblivion for which they crave. Men cannot be frightened into virtue: for the virtue which is the outcome of fear is the worst form of vice. The object of a Holy Bible is that men through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope. The church must use her literature to hearten men and not to frighten them: to give them hope not fear. It is the truth that is of validity, and not man's



expression of the truth. That will always be faulty. The church must acknowledge that she no longer regards the letter of the Bible as of validity. She must use her scriptures for their proper purpose, as a means to an end. Only so will they become worthy of the title that she gives them. They will be worthy of the name of Holy Bible, because they will give to men wholeness of life.

Perhaps the most insidious form of idolatry is that with which our Lord contended when His opponents quoted the "traditions of men." Such idolatry is still prevalent to-day. A large section of Christendom makes it its chief boast that it preserves most carefully the traditions of the elders; and every evangelical Anglican who supports his arguments with appeals to the first six centuries of the present era, every Anglo-catholic who would tie down the present generation to the opinions and practices of the fourteenth century, every Bible Christian who insists on a modern reproduction of forms of worship which he imagines to be apostolic, is tainted with idolatry of this sort. The church of the future will concern herself chiefly with the time in which she finds herself. She will have the same criterion for her modes of worship as is employed by the ordinary man in the affairs of every day.

She will ask herself whether they are seemly and effective ways of proclaiming her purpose. She will reverence the past. She will value the modes of expression used in ancient days, but she will value them as a means to an end.

When once it is admitted that they are but a means to an end, it will become possible to use again for their proper purpose all the time-honoured conventions of religion. Some sort of convention is as necessary to organised religion as it is to any other sort of business. When man communicates with man, he does so by means of an agreed-on system of signals, whether those signals take the form of words or writing or pantomime. Most words were in origin mere imitative noises. All writing probably originated in crude, descriptive pictures. Gradually and slowly the imitative noises and pictured scenes of actual happenings became more and more conventionalised and expressive of abstract ideas. But from its very first inception the meaning of a word is simply and solely a matter of convention. It is the result of an unwritten treaty or convention between the individuals who use it. They agree consciously, or more often unconsciously, that a certain noise shall have a certain significance. The mother who gives her child the bottle to check its crying, is

really ratifying a treaty by which she and the baby covenant with one another that a certain sound shall mean "Give me food!" No concerted actions and no communications at all between human beings are possible without conventions of some sort. Public worship, as compared with private meditation, is essentially a concerted action. Without conventions it cannot be performed.

If the conventions of ordinary daily life are traced back to their source, they will be found to have expressed originally an entirely different meaning from that which modern society gives to them. The smile with which we welcome our friend, the stranger, is said by some to have had its origin in the terrifying or terrified grimace with which a man used to greet the stranger-foe. The right hand of fellowship was perhaps originally the nervous grip with which a man seized the stranger's hand, to prevent him from stabbing him unawares. We do not abandon the conventions of politeness on account of their origin: nor need we abandon the conventions of religious worship on account of their early history.

Holy Communion, Holy Mass, Holy Baptism and solemn dance and chant all trace their ancestry back to the early annals of the human



race, and some of them, possibly, to times yet more remote. Our earliest human ancestors found that an added dignity came to social life when men solemnly shared together the life of their God. Is there any reason why men to-day should cease to hold the solemn feast, now that we know that all life is divine?—now that we know that God resides in common bread and common wine? We still need Holy Communion if any communion is to be holy. We still need the sacrament to remind us of what we so often forget: that we are brethren only in the Lord and that there is nothing common or unclean for God is everywhere.

Our earliest ancestors showed their thankfulness to the Lord of all good life with dance and song. Surely we may do the same? While the Bridegroom is away, men mourn; but now we have the Bridegroom always with us. He does not suddenly come down from heaven to separate altars: nor does he take our souls away from earth when we find Him at the Eucharist. For a little moment society pauses from its toil and proclaims in symbolic act that the Bridegroom is always present among men. He is out in the streets and market places of the world, as He was many years ago when He dwelt in Jesus of Nazareth. And the very proclamation of eternal

truth enables us for a moment to see the truth more clearly. Our eyes are opened for a little space that we may perceive more clearly the Presence that is always in our midst. In corporate act of worship society acknowledges the divinity that encompasses the world, and, by its acknowledgement, its knowledge is intensified and realised.

Our earliest ancestors testified to their thankfulness for the life and energy that fertilized their fields by bringing gifts to the gods of Force and Vitality. Shall we not bring gifts to our Heavenly Father? A gift is nothing worth to the Lord of all, men say. But is the grubby gift of a little child of no value in its human parent's eyes? Most mothers keep such gifts and treasure them most tenderly.

In ancient days men offered sacrifice because they believed that sacrifice was well pleasing to the gods. Experience had taught them that a man's actions affected not only his own welfare, but the welfare of the whole community. A coward endangered not himself alone but every single member of the tribe. A brave man brought salvation to the whole state. Experience taught this and so the idea of self-sacrifice arose. One man might die that many might go free. To-day we are coming dimly to perceive that self-

sacrifice is part of God's own very being. To-day we know that the voluntary death to secure a greater intensity of life is part of universal law. Surely we know to-day, better than any other generation has known it, that all the actions of the most insignificant man affect the whole wide world for good or ill? Because our timid forbears disfigured the atonement of Jesus with hideous theories of substitution and payment, shall we refuse any longer to make memorial of His death? The death of Jesus on the cross is the type of every voluntary death that man has ever undergone for the sake of his friends. It is the great atonement. It shows that self-sacrificing man is at one with self-sacrificing God. It is more than this. Self-sacrificing man helps on his more selfish brethren, not only by force of example but by directer means. For God is love, and greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. Self-sacrificing man is divine, wherever he may be found. In his divinity lies the hope of the divinity and perfection of the human race. When we are oppressed with a sense of sin and of our own shortcomings, and when honesty compels us to admit that in our present state we are so far from perfection that scarcely dare we even try to draw nearer God, we long for help



and strength to come to us from outside our individual natures. We do not long in vain. We can present and spread forth before Perfection that offering made by every human being in whom the Self has triumphed over bodily desire. We, too, pitiful though we may be, are embedded in humanity. We share its triumphs. We are strengthened by its victories.

It is sometimes said that the difference between a system of morality and a religious system lies in this : that the one tells men what they should do ; the other helps them to do it. The Way of the Cross is religious. It is dynamic. It has motive power. It binds humanity consciously together into one great whole, in which each member is strengthened by the strength of all the members. Not in his own strength only is it possible for anyone to stand. Even as he derives his temporal form and estate from by-gone ancestors, even as he inherits from them much that is reckoned among men as his very own nature, so also he cannot but benefit spiritually by the self-sacrifice of those who have gone before. And this benefit is a free gift. It is not earned by any merit of the recipient. It is a part of the great inheritance of humanity. Men need to be reminded of their inheritance. They are reminded in Holy Mass, and those who

with receptive hearts frequent the Mass find by experience that strength flows into them. Holy Mass may be the bloody sacrifice of ancient days conventionalised. It is none the less sacred for that. It supplies a need that all experience who seek to realise their divinity. It assures them that they are not to rely on their own strength only in their struggle to be one with God. They may avail themselves of all the strength of all the sons of men who have died to earthly life, that others might find Life.

“Look, Father, look on His anointed Face,  
And only look on us as found in Him :  
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,  
Our prayer so languid and our faith so dim :  
For lo ! between our sins and their reward  
We set the passion of Thy Son, our Lord.”

As a commentary to this verse we would point out that the Lord Jesus, as He hung upon the Cross, observed His Mother sharing His suffering. The suffering of “ God’s Son, our Lord ” includes the painful effort of each meritorious man or woman who has shown forth the Christ.

In the days to come the church will joyfully use all the conventions of religion. The symbols of the faith, that to-day are known as creeds, the Bible, the Sacraments, yes and even Jesus Himself will be regarded as a means to an end.

Let it not be thought blasphemy for one who is firmly convinced that Jesus is very God, to suggest that He should also be regarded as a means to an end. Jesus Himself showed that He so regarded Himself, when He said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." The whole object of all the accessories of religion is to give more salvation or fulness of life. God on earth is certainly a means to an end. His end is His self-realisation amid unreality. When once the conventions of religion are regarded as means to an end, they will provide a standard, redolent of ancient victories, beneath which men may freely march together towards the boundless future.

God is love and by love alone can He be realised on earth. Some day the law of the church will be as simple as its creed. It will be as simple as the law of the ordinary, decent man, who says, "that a fellow should stand by his pals." It will be as simple as the law which we have from Jesus, that he who loveth God love his brother also. The second half of Jesus' commandment is like unto the first, because God dwelleth in our brother. On the one commandment of love hang all the law and the prophets. Love is the only word which fitly can emblazon the standard of society.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### SOCIAL UTTERANCE

SOCIETY needs a definite sanction, a definite standard and a definite law, such as all its members could willingly accept. It needs, also, some means of impressing its law and standard upon the attention of its members. It needs a body of men to act as its representatives and to proclaim its purpose. It needs a priesthood.

There is to-day no priesthood which is representative of society as a whole. Nonconformist ministers only claim to speak each for his own sect. Anglican ministers, it is true, claim to speak for the whole of Christian England, and Papist ministers claim to speak for the whole of Christendom, but nobody outside the pale of their respective communions admits their claims. Nor will any priesthood be generally accepted, which is not open to any decent man who tries to do his duty in this present world, no matter what may be his intellectual theories about the next world. A religious system deals with forms

and ceremonies. It is concerned with this finite world in which we live. It has no right to demand of its candidates for office any expression of opinion about that state where all limitations are done away. The qualification for the priesthood should be moral. It should deal with theory only as it is exemplified in practice, for the priest is essentially a man who performs an act. He needs not to be acquainted with the theories that lie behind his action.

In ancient times men looked upon the priest primarily as a man who in the name of society performed various symbolical and social acts. His office had a sanctity which was peculiarly its own, and it was reserved for men of greatest learning. Secondarily, therefore, the priest came to be looked upon as a wise man and he was credited with magic powers. Undoubtedly at one period of the evolution of society the priests did use their greater knowledge of natural forces to overawe the multitudes, and magic was not without its uses in enabling the foremost men of the tribes to gain the mastery over their more timid and savage brethren. But after the proclamation of Jesus' message, it became unnecessary for a body of professional priests to exercise extraordinary powers. Each single man was a Temple of the Holy Spirit. The whole

of society, and not merely a certain number of its members, was sacred. In the early days of its history the Reformed Society was well aware that the priestly functions were not confined to a special set of men, although for convenience sake they were performed only by certain members of the society. "Call no man father or Lord," said Jesus. "Ye are a royal priesthood," wrote His great disciple Peter. The old sacerdos had been a superior officer, the new presbyter was an elder brother in a priestly body.

But gradually the new society became afraid of the responsibilities of royalty and priestliness. The presbyterate became differentiated altogether from the mass of the body. Again the priest became the sacerdos, a man clothed with supernatural powers and altogether superior to the ordinary mortal. His ordination came to be regarded as "indelible." No longer was he to be the elder brother of the family. He was become the family medicine man or soul doctor. He was become a professional man. No longer was he an amateur.

He presumed on his office. Ever greater were his demands, till at last society rose against him. In the anger of its rising, it eliminated all trace of its corporate priestliness, while the medicine man, the soul doctor, escaped unscathed. And



the new medicine man was worse than the first. The old medicine man had at least belonged to a duly accredited college of medicine. He had at least been obliged to qualify before he was allowed to practise. The new medicine man was a quack. When the old Catholic system was destroyed, society as a whole ceased to have any means of licensing its soul-doctors, and every little Bethel had its unauthorised charlatan reeling off prescriptions for avoiding hell.

The modern sacerdotalist threatens no great danger to society. Men are no longer frightened by his threats and they deny the efficacy of his charms. They treat him as more or less of a joke. They know that the Great Amateur was no professional priest trying to terrify men into goodness and hedged about with mysterious aloofness. He was the Good Companion, Who shocked the scribes with his vulgar familiarity with the crowd. He was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, the friend of tax farmers and sinners. He was a convivial sort of a man. Of course He was : the Christ dwelt in Him and in the Christ all human beings are akin. He was as full of life as any child playing at funerals or weddings in a market square. Of course He was : the Christ dwelt in Him and the Christ is the Lord of Life. He never traded on people's fears.

Instead He made His appeal to the desire for ever-increasing intensity of life which is breathed into every human heart by the spirit of adventurous love. The modern priest threatens no great danger to society ; he furnishes the comic relief on the stage of modern life.

It is the serious pretensions of the scientific expert, and not the ludicrous pretensions of the theological student, against which society should be on its guard. The scientist may yet become the medicine-man of the future. Many people are inclined to take his opinions as absolute. They are inclined to make the science which gave them health and freedom into a superstition which shall poison them with fear and lead to death. The stimulant of one generation is the poison of the next. Unless men keep their sanity and remember that life is a game, science may become an idol more terrible than any that has ever ground them down. The day may come when a man's bride will be selected for him by the state and when his food will be prescribed by official science. Already the total abstinence fanatics invoke the aid of parliament to enforce their peculiar views on other people. The tyranny of science is a real menace to society to-day. That danger can only be kept permanently at bay when society has a religious system

that enables it to look at life as a whole. No religious system will be able to help society in this way until the priesthood is restored to that position from which it was ousted by the fears of men.

The truly catholic priest is the agent or representative of society. In the name of the whole community, at stated times and at stated places, he performs some public, symbolic and conventional action by means of which the community makes formal acknowledgement of its divinity and prays for strength to attain to divine perfection. As the agent or priest performs this sacred act, society is enabled to look at the world with other-worldly eyes. She stands, as it were, away from the picture of creation and views life as a whole. She begins to understand that if she would treat earthly life successfully, she must not treat it too seriously. Earthly life is a game of make-believe, and the things and forms which loom so very large on earthly horizons are nothing at all. All that is real is self or life. Only by taking forms and using them as a means to express her divine life can society hope to realise the life divine in this formal, finite world.

Society needs a truly representative priesthood to act as her agency for the performance of the Eucharistic act. She needs a representative



priesthood to act as her mouthpiece. All sin is social sin. When the individual sins, he always sins against society. Each tiniest word or deed or thought or omission of his affects the whole wide world. Unless he makes the best of himself, then part of the body politic is less efficient than it should be. "Whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it." The individual is at once the servant and the master of society. Society should be able to express its forgiveness of the wrongs that individuals do to it: partly for its own sake, for society, like the individual, can only "be angry without sin, when it lets not the sun go down upon its wrath." A harboured grudge rankles in the heart of society, as it does in that of an individual. Partly society should be able to express its forgiveness for the sake of the sinner. Men who have found the assurance of forgiveness are given new strength wherewith to make a new start. They are no longer weighed down with the heavy load of unforgiven guilt. Until society has some means of declaring herself, she will be unable to fulfil that function which is the only justification for her existence. She will be unable to give the individual every aid in his effort to realise himself in God.

The need for a duly commissioned priesthood

has never been quite forgotten. The rite of ordination has never been neglected in the official sects. But it has been perverted from its proper use, and the indelible ordination of sectarianism is supposed by many to confer a sort of magic priestly power. Really ordination is simply a licence issued by a body of men to certain of its members to act as agents of the whole body, and if ordination were restored to its proper use, all difficulty about the "re-ordination" of nonconformist ministers would disappear. They themselves claim to have received no commission from the Church of England. They claim with perfect propriety to have received a commission from the various bodies which they serve. Before they can minister in another sect it is to be supposed that they themselves would wish to be duly commissioned by that sect, whether it be a National Church or some nonconformist body. They themselves would scarcely wish to intrude as unauthorised interlopers.

When ordination is regarded in its proper light, and when the test for office in the National Church is such as any ordinary decent man can accept, then at last it will be possible to restore the priesthood to its proper position. The task of restoration should not be difficult, if it be boldly

tackled. Each clergyman already interprets creeds and Bible in a manner different from that of his neighbour; each decent man, cleric and laic alike, already acknowledges one only dictator of his conduct—his sense of duty. Facts have only to be frankly recognised and the way lies open for the re-formation of a truly representative priesthood.

If the priesthood is to be kept truly representative, every precaution must be taken to guard against professionalism in the future. It might be wise for individuals to receive a commission to act as the priestly agents of the community for a limited number of years. In any case the office should be without any emoluments, except perhaps a small sum for expenses of official entertainment.

Most of the work done by modern clergymen is of a non-priestly character. It is pastoral, or ministerial or prophetic. There is no reason why pastors and ministers should not be paid. Society will always need men who give up their whole time to the organisation of social life. Nor is there any reason why the prophet should not receive a salary even as any other author is paid, whether he be a public speaker or a writer. A theological student, also, is deserving of a fair wage, just as is any other student of



philosophy, provided that he is a real student and not merely a reader of text-books. But the priestly office should not be made into a source of livelihood. It is an honour. It is as honourable as royalty, for the priest exercises the royal function which is inherent in society. Men are not paid to receive an honour. The only priests who should receive payment from ecclesiastical funds should be those in episcopal orders, and bishops should draw a salary not as priests but as pastors. A bishop is the pastor *pastorum*. He must necessarily devote the whole of his time to his office and he is, therefore, precluded from earning his living in other ways. In order to guard against professionalism, no other priest except a bishop should be allowed to fill a salaried position in the church.

Bishops, even at present, are only appointed when they have reached a certain age, and the episcopate, for that reason, is freer from professionalism than is the presbyterate. The best bishops at the present day are already often drawn from a wider circle than that of the parochial and regular clergy. It is already customary to appoint schoolmasters. Why should not the range of choice be extended, when once the old credal tests are abolished, to include doctors, lawyers, sailors, and soldiers and eminent men of

learning from every walk in life ? The episcopate should be the supreme Order of Merit.

Bishops are already appointed by the King in Council. Why should not this method of appointment be extended to include the parochial clergy ? Why should not the village council appoint any man who is esteemed for his probity and courage to act as the people's representative man. Such a man would be a true priest. He would, of course, be duly ordained by the Bishop. Thus popular acclamation would not be the only guarantee of his fitness for his sacred office.

Each parish should have a priest, whose function it would be to preside at the Eucharist and to act as the mouthpiece of the congregation. It should have, also, at least one paid deacon or minister. Such a man would be skilled in elocution, as it would fall to him to "take the service." He might well combine his position as deacon with that of village schoolmaster in country districts. The emoluments of the two offices would enable him to live at the parsonage house in some degree of comfort, and the sacred nature of his Sunday duties would give him additional authority as schoolmaster. In the near future it is probable that all people will be obliged to begin their children's education in the elementary schools. It is important, there-

fore, for everyone, and not only for the so-called working classes, that these schools should be brought to the highest possible level of efficiency, and that they should be educational and not merely instructional centres.

When once society has a creed and standard which all men accept and a priesthood which is really typical of ordinary, decent humanity, public worship will come again to occupy the position from which the puritans dislodged it. It should be the flower of organised religion. To-day the flower is a poor specimen, not grown by the people themselves but an exotic imported by the professional clergy from their theological colleges. Except at the Harvest Festivals, and Watchnight Services, which so many clergy despise, public worship has none of that joyful exuberance which should stamp it as the natural and spontaneous expression of the people's religious aspiration. It does not reflect the feelings of the ordinary man.

But the public worship of the future will spring naturally from the people's hearts. It will be of the people and it will belong to them. It will no longer be an affair of legal definition and prescription. It will become again the symbolical action of society. Men will wash their babies' foreheads: they will not try to analyse their



infants' souls. They will break the bread and outpour the wine at the Eucharist: they will not try to classify divinity.

The Church of England already asserts that each nation may choose its own rites and ceremonies for itself. Why should not the like liberty of choice be extended to every congregation provided that nothing is done to outrage the religious sense of the whole community. Many and varied are the uses to which our churches might be put. Babies might play about in them and come to them to listen to stories about Jesus and about all the heroes of the past. In the churches children should learn that quality must be appreciated; beautiful books and images and pictures should adorn the house of God. In the churches young people should be taught that energy is divine; sacred procession, drill and gymnastic exercises should be performed in church when girls and boys are skilled enough to dance with due solemnity before the Lord of Life.

In church should be enacted the ceremonies by which the babies are admitted to the brotherhood of humanity. In church the ceremonies of initiation should be concluded when boys and girls have learnt how best to use their bodies to the greatest good of themselves and of the world. The village lad, who hides behind a

haystack to indulge in filth, is only obeying the spirit of adventurous love that urges him to probe the secrets of nature and to seek companionship with his kind. He sins through ignorance. Lads will give up illicit ways of satisfying their craving for adventure when they learn that real and thrilling adventure only comes to those who learn to discipline themselves. They will give up unlawful comradeship with one another when they learn that they are comrades of God, and of society. Such lessons are already taught in our schools and colleges. The academic authorities have found the necessity of a real and vital system of religion for their lads and they have allowed athleticism to serve their purpose. The school authorities have shown the way to society. When public worship is again truly popular, the old divorcement that puritanism decreed between spirit and flesh will be annulled. The doctors must admit that the world is One. They must gladly use the conventions of religion to help them in their work. They must teach our children how to use the rosary to ward off evil thoughts. They must teach them how to meditate and pray. With solemn rite and ceremony they must initiate them into a knowledge of sex. They must not let them gain their knowledge underhand.

All knowledge leads to God and all the sin of the world is caused by ignorance of God. The sordidness of the world is caused by the dullness that comes of ignorance of Him. Men long for fresh experience and in their ignorance they seek it in the dregs of existence instead of in the sparkle of real life. The village sot who soaks himself in beer is only trying to forget the terrible monotony of village life and to weave some golden dreams of might-have-been. The blowsy woman from the slums of London who only lives for gin, lives for gin only because it helps her to forget the dreariness of life. The women of the leisured classes who waste themselves in riotous living, have never been taught how to increase themselves in wisdom. Their irane cackle and gossip and love of little things are but the signs of the emptiness of their lives.

The church of the future will be one with the educational system. Colleges and Universities will spring up again on the soil where the ancient abbey stood and in the village churches will be delivered lectures by men and women who are skilled in any branch of learning. Each village church shall be a centre of light, and the light of Christ shall chase away the gloom of darkness. Men and women shall be made to understand the joy of craftsmanship. They shall be made to



see the purpose of society. No longer will they be the witless cogs of a deadening machine. They will be the living members of the living Christ, and life will lose its dullness. Eucharist and Mass and Holy Communion will really hallow common life. Each common day will be a holy day and every holy day will be a holiday, for work will be a pleasure. Great is the inspiration which the clergy of the present day derive from the grace of orders. They feel that they are ordained and consecrated to the performance of a special task. This inspiration might be extended till it was felt by every member of society. Why should not the road-mender come to church and ask a blessing on his tools? Why should he not be solemnly set apart by society for his sacred task of mending the roads that are trodden by men who are immortal? Every member of society is the representative of society in his avocation, and in his avocation every human being is the representative of God. God brushes boots and washes dishes and scrubs floors. The self in man is God, and man is only man while he remembers this. The religious system of society and its worship should be designed to keep its members in constant remembrance of their divinity. Each single member of humanity should be ordained and

consecrated for his holy task. God gave some to be apostles ; and some prophets ; and some evangelists ; and some pastors and teachers ; and some butchers and bakers and artisans and scavengers and doctors and merchants and sailors and engineers ; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ ; till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro, without settled policy or purpose, but dealing truly in love may grow up in all things unto Him, which is the head, even Christ ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love. When society has a religious system which can voice its religious aspiration, it will become conscious that it is a living organism ; and they which in time past were no people, but merely a mob of individuals, will become the people of God.

That religious system may grow out of our present Church of England ; or, rather, the Church of England may be one of the threads

which shall be woven into the fair cord which shall some day bind society in the bond of love. Englishmen still have a hankering affection for the system which tries, however feebly, to give expression to the religious feeling of their nation. They feel that their nationality is a part of God's first birthday present that He gave them when they were born. They did not choose it for themselves. God chose it for them. He went to His great toy-cupboard and chose the family into which He put them down. He chose their native place and ancestry. He chose the time when they should live. Nationality is a part of God's first present to a man. A man should make the best of his country and of the religious system of his country. He should not smash it up in an access of bad temper and seek to make himself another toy instead. Yet that is what men are doing when they forsake the church of their fathers and join the church of Rome or any other little man-made sect or mutual edification society.

Ordinary Englishmen feel all this in a dim sort of way. The private soldier puts down "C. of E." on his identity disc. He has a sort of affection for the religious system of his country. But just because Englishmen are fond of their church, they are also half-angry with her. They



feel towards her as a schoolboy feels towards his mother, when she visits his school dressed in a way that he considers to be unbecoming. She is not showing herself to advantage. She is dowdy. She smacks a little of the provincial. She is not quite sure of herself. She is just a little bit too anxious for the good opinion of her apparently venerable Roman and Greek aunts and of her obviously rich and pushing American cousins. She is always wondering what other people are thinking of her. Before she can become confident and dignified she must learn to be natural. She must be content to be herself and not try to be an imitation of anyone else. She must not care one farthing for what other people think about her. She must make the truth her only aim. If the church would make the truth her only aim, and forget the very words expediency and compromise, then modern organised religion would lose its unreality and ordinary men would use it once again.

Before the church can cease to be provincial, she must cease to be ashamed of her ancestry. It is only in little places and out of the way, that men jeer at a successful neighbour because his grandfather was engaged in retail trade. The Church of England must gladly recognise that the Christ has animated every religious

system which has ever helped humanity on its way: she must be proud to admit that the forms of her religious worship can be traced right back to primitive man. Then and only then will she satisfy the longing in men's hearts for a system of religion which shall give the intimacy of home and family things and yet shall link them on to all humanity.

Our religion is as old as the hills and as far flung as the oceans. The forms in which it is presented may be traced back to the beginning of our race. Surely it is wise to glory in the paganism of those forms? *Pagus* means a village and pagan is a word that men apply to religious forms and ceremonies which linger on in the hamlets of the countryside. If we glory in the paganism of our Christianity we shall admit ourselves to a catholicity of which Romanism is but the palest shadow, and we shall gain a love of home and kith and kin and of the kindly customs of our native place, to which the halting nationalism of the Church of England as at present constituted is as the wavering vagueness of a cosmopolitan.

Every true religious system must be at once national and catholic; it must belong to the village and belong to the universe, for it treats of the God who lives "in heaven" and yet is

to be found in any human home or human heart. In the happy days to come the village shall no longer remain in dreadful isolation from the world at large, and the world at large shall gain the intimacy of village life. Religion shall no longer be something separate from the common things of every day, but through the windows of our national church shall come streaming in the rays of that Light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.



## POSTSCRIPT.

THE author desires to say that he has retired from the official positions which are mentioned in the Introduction to this book. He felt that some of the suggestions put forward by him demanded a liberty of expression which was incompatible with stated adherence to credal formulas as definite as those still retained by the Church of England. Not only were his own private doubts about the correctness of his own position affecting his bodily health and thus impairing his usefulness as a parish clergyman : his duty to the Church at large seemed also to call for his resignation. As an unaccredited, private person he compromises no society, great or small, by his writing. Neither directly nor indirectly is anyone bound to accept or to repudiate responsibility for his words. As an accredited teacher of the Church, he might have imposed upon his superiors the duty of deciding whether his opinions came within the limits of orthodoxy. In these days of mental and social

unsettlement wise men suspend their judgment. No one, who values the organic continuity of our Church, would dare do anything to-day, which might force an issue that the authorities do not desire, and which might compel them to give further definition to orthodoxy and thus perhaps still further widen the gulf between the nation and its Church. The author's resignation was voluntary. It implies no episcopal decision. Indeed the kindest pressure was put upon him to take six months' leave of absence from his parish for further thought and study.

The work, to which these words are in post-script, is admittedly tentative. It makes no claim to be authoritative in any way. Its writer is conscious that he is without that depth of learning which gives real weight to an expression of opinion. At the same time he earnestly desires his theories to be embodied in book form, that opportunity may be given for their discussion. Sometimes the words of a simple man, whose activities have been concerned with the practice of life, are as useful as the utterance of learned scholars, whose scholarship has involved the concentration of study and possibly some consequent lack of sympathy with the lives and thoughts of common people. Sometimes the gardener sees what escapes the botanist's notice.

The book was partly the outcome of its author's conviction that many modern problems will only be solved when there is an organism in which, and by means of which, all men of good will may consciously unite their strength and co-ordinate their effort for the promotion of upright living. Surely the national Church should provide the skeleton for such an organism? And surely a Church, which is truly national, must be based on that in which there is common agreement among all the best minds of the nation? Are they agreed on more than these three axioms:

- i. That a man must follow after Truth.
- ii. That a man must do the best he knows.
- iii. That a man must have ever open ears to hear a better than the best that he has known.

The writer ventures to suggest that these three axioms furnish a sufficient basis for our national Church. Further he would suggest that no candidate for the prophetic, priestly and pastoral offices should be invited to affirm a belief in more than these three axioms. Indeed he fails to see why any assertion of theological opinion should be demanded of a clergyman. Anything in the nature of a written constitution is really alien from the English mind. A physician must give proof of his learning, but he is not asked to subscribe to any written medical tenets. No



is a schoolmaster asked to signify his assent to any pedagogic dogma ; yet it is to him that we entrust the moral training of our young. Willingly does the present writer admit that the accredited teachers of the Church should be better instructed in philosophy and natural science than they are to-day. Willingly would he welcome a far higher educational test for the clergy before they are allowed to teach. But he would suggest that in these days of division of labour it is anachronistic to concentrate the prophetic, priestly and pastoral functions in one individual. Each function demands a special capability in its functionary. Few, if any, men are fitted to hold the threefold office.

Personally, of course, the writer holds many theological opinions, which cannot be included in the three axioms. Here he desires plainly to affirm that :

i. He believes the Lord Jesus to be God : but he also believes the divinity of all men to differ from that of the Lord in degree and not, as seems to be the opinion of most clergymen, in kind. (So great is his belief in his Lord's divinity that he would not think it necessary to protect it with credal bulwarks.)

ii. He is inclined to believe that the Lord Jesus had extraordinary powers over nature ; but the

whole question of the credibility of miracles fails to interest him. The Jesus, Whom he worships, is the Jesus, Who is portrayed in the pages of the New Testament. Whether or no that portrait gives an exact likeness of a life, that once was lived in Palestine, is a question which expert scholars must decide, and expert scholars, as it seems, are not in agreement with one another. Even if the miracles recorded of Jesus never occurred, their value to us is perhaps not lessened. They still throw a light on the character of Him, Whom we worship. Any legends, that have gained credence about any man, must needs be in accordance with what was known of that man's character by those among whom the legends grew up. If the miraculous doings ascribed to Jesus are legends, they are legends that grew up actually among His own contemporaries. It is true that we find little reference to His miraculous powers in St. Paul's letters : yet the gospels are not of so greatly later date than the epistles. In any case, why need we wrangle about any specific miracle of ancient times ? The world is still miraculous to-day. It still excites our wonder and passes far beyond our understanding. We are still standing on the threshold of the unknown.

iii. He believes that the differences between

the "High Church" party and the "Low Church" party are merely trivial, and that the difference even between a good "Buddhist" and a good "Christian" is only superficial. The fundamental difference that divides religious-minded men is this: some men there are who try to worship God in spirit and in truth: others maintain that He is to be worshipped only in that same place where they themselves have found Him, or only in that same embodiment in which they themselves have seen Him. The writer places himself within the former of these two groups. Yet he would think tenderly of the second group, although to him it seems to be tainted with idolatry. To one, who has found the Lord in Jerusalem, Jerusalem may well seem to be unique. Indeed to him Jerusalem is unique. Those who by any method have gained a glimpse of God's majesty and love, may be excused if the glory of their own discovery blinds their eyes to other aspects of that same glory. The writer believes in, and desires to work for, the coming of a truly universal and visible Church, wherein all men may rejoice together, who have seen the Light anywhere, in Samaria or in Jerusalem, in Rome or in Constantinople, in London or in Thibet.

iv. He believes in the life to come, though he



would be inclined to lay stress rather on the idea of ultimate union with God than on the idea of continuity of personal identity. Indeed he does not profess to know what is meant by continuity of personal identity. The cells that compose a man's body each live their own life,—but all the meaning of their little lives comes from the man whose body they compose. Men are—and will be after death, the writer believes—the living cells of God's Body.

v. He believes that by sacrament and prayer a man can commune with perfect God.

vi. He believes that the Way which leads to God is the Way of Self-sacrifice; for God, he thinks, is love. Surely all men agree that there is nothing better than self-sacrificing love? Surely this ideal is contained implicitly in the axiom that a man must do the best he knows? Surely, also, a belief in God's existence and in His righteousness is implicitly contained in that same axiom? How else can a man say that he *must* do the best he knows? But equally surely the best manner of rendering explicit all that is implicit in the three axioms is not by verbal nicety but by the practical activity of exemplifying lives?

Such are the writer's private views. Certainly he would not wish to limit the national Church

to those who share them, or to those who do not go beyond them. Cannot there be one national—nay, one universal—visible Church, based on such truths as all decent men apprehend? Within that Church might there not be many little societies and groups, each of them recommending to its members some specific beliefs, which may not necessarily be accepted by other groups?

Least of all, at present, would the writer desire to enforce the theories enunciated in the earlier chapters of his book. Already one competent theologian has stated that the conception outlined in those chapters is crude and immature. The writer knows that it is immature. And in its obvious lack of maturity lies its value. No theology can ever hope to be mature in this world. It is only in the hereafter that knowledge of God can ripen to maturity. That is precisely the lesson which this whole book is seeking to repeat. However long may be a scholar's meditations, if he is meditating about God and ultimate things, his resulting thought will always be crude; the language of his expression will always be uncouth. The babes and sucklings lisp their hymns of praise; the scholar pens his careful definition. The hymn of praise may be as near Perfection as any balanced statement of a scholar's creed.

The earlier pages of this book should be treated as the first vague utterances of an untrained mind confronted with the wonders of evolution and of history. The philosophy, which the author's interest in historical development has led him to propound, may be untenable. But the history of religious development does, indeed, need to be considered afresh to-day. The facts of that history are not unknown. Those, who concern themselves with comparative religion, know where to find them. In a popular work, such as this aims at being, the author has thought it unwise to touch on them save in the lightest and least dogmatic way. Much has yet to be written about the rites and ceremonies of ancient mysteries. Some little knowledge is already abroad. Surely it is wise not to shut the eye to this knowledge, but to face it manfully and to seek to reconcile it with the practice of those religious observances which custom has endeared, and which are the normal means of grace for many ?

The author desires that any doubtful or inconsistent passages in the book should be interpreted in the light of the axioms and statements of personal belief given in this postscript. No phrase that he has written should be understood apart from its context, and its context is the



whole book. The whole book is purposely vague. It was with a great sense of responsibility that its author sought to give it publication. That sense of responsibility has been heightened almost painfully by the weighty words addressed to him by one whom he reveres alike for his ripe judgment and wide experience.

Some of these words he ventures with permission here to quote. "I am an old man," writes his correspondent, "and I have seen much of the mental perplexity . . . which sweeps into and across the whole outlook of a keen and earnest man, as he stands among the huge perplexities of life, and questions imperatively or fretfully the 'orthodox' conclusions and explanations which are strangely satisfying to some of his fellows. They are real things, these questionings, and they ought not to be rudely quenched or stifled or silenced, even if such stifling were possible, for sometimes they are the voice of God through conscience and show the roadway to a surer truth. But they need cautious treatment, and there may be very real danger in giving them the immortality of print while they are still only the honest "thinking out loud" of a man who has had little opportunity of applying to them adequate mental deliberation and cross-examination, or of testing their sound-

ness by finding how they strike the intelligence of really capable and friendly critics.

“ I could give you from my personal experience examples of men who passed through such experiences, especially in times of excitement and unrest, and have found themselves in later years marvelling at what they see to have been shallowness, if not the self-assurance of the younger and unsubstantial impressions which once were theirs.

“ I have no sort of right to say that this is so with you. I do not know what you have written or on what basis of careful, prayerful thought and study it rests. It may not only be justifiable but vitally true. I have no means of judging. I only point out the very real danger of hasty utterance in print in days of emergency and hesitancy and uncertainty and, as one would hope, of suspended judgments.”

In giving publication to this work, the author is moved by the sincere desire to serve the men of his generation. He knows that he is not really competent to speak. But, he asks himself, is anyone really competent? And the need of speech is immediate. There is among the clergy of every school of thought in the Church of England to-day a tendency to narrow the basis on which that Church stands. Election to the

*ancient* office of churchwarden is made by *all* the rate-payers of a parish. Election to the church councils set up by the *Enabling Act of 1919* is made by baptised persons of a certain age, whether they pay rates or not. Yet this newer qualification is really narrower than the old. *It excludes from influence in the councils of the national Church* those who, though they wish to vote and are duly baptised, yet will not disavow their membership in a nonconformist body. It may be argued that the churchwarden's office dates back to a time when there was but one religious system in England. And this is true. Yet now for many years nonconformist electors have been allowed to record their votes if they so desired. Until recent years the greatest breadth and latitude have characterised the national Church. To-day the term "latitudinarian" is used by the clergy almost instinctively as a term of abuse. The clergy of to-day glory in their sectarianism and in their aloofness from the nation. They deride the authority of Parliament in spiritual affairs. Yet Parliament is the council of the whole nation. It is Parliament which once decided that the national religious system had so lost touch with national religious aspiration that it stood in need of reform. What Parliament has done once



it can do again. The author of this book desires to serve the men of his generation. He believes that he can serve them best by urging them to re-form themselves into a Church. Re-formation has a wider significance than reformation. The Church of England cannot stand still. Men are not wise. They are not suspending their judgment. Like it or not as we may, the basis of our Church must become broader or narrower. The present writer would give it infinite breadth. England and, indeed, the world to-day have such instant need of a church in which *all* honest men may unite! This book is crude and immature. Possibly it is shallow. Certainly it is the work of an inexperienced youth—he is the contemporary of those who engineered the “Life and Liberty Movement.” But it has this to excuse its publication, that it aims at making human life divine. It aims at the re-formation of a church that shall voice the real religious feeling of common men and give expression to the religious aspiration of society.

And the author is without self-assurance. He expects and wishes to learn from his critics far more than he can teach. Nor is he greatly afraid of doing harm. *Who* is the ultimate cause of the publication of his book? And, after all, the influence of the written word is probably no more

immortal than that of the unuttered thought. The road that leads to the second-hand-book-seller's shop and thence to the paper factory has soon been followed by many a theological treatise, which on its first appearance caused a commotion out of all proportion to its worth. This little book will soon follow that same path unless it contains some truth that needed to be expressed to-day.

One word more : In the author's own opinion no word that he has written should prevent a single son or daughter of the Church from continuing to frequent the Sacrament and to make full use of all the Church's offices. It is easier to be a "practising Catholic" than a "theorising Catholic." It is easier, and for all, who do not feel absolutely impelled to try to probe to the roots of the tree, it is probably wiser. By the fruits of the tree, the tree is known. The fruits of that catholicism, which is to be found in the Church of England, provide the food which many know to have sustained them. With that knowledge they can safely and wisely and not ignobly rest content. This book is primarily intended for those others to whom the sacramental life is yet unknown. May no word that is written in its pages "make sad those whom God has not made sad," to

quote again from the letter that has already been cited. Instead, may it bring some gladness to those who, living in the midst of Life, have vainly sought in deathly things to find their happiness.



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